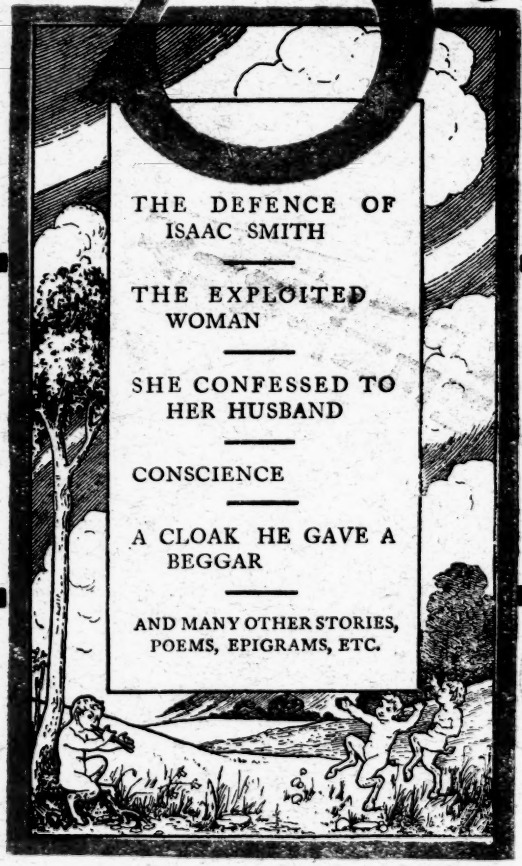
THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

To Amuse, Not to Instruct



THE DEFENCE OF ISAAC SMITH

THE EXPLOITED WOMAN

SHE CONFESSED TO HER HUSBAND

CONSCIENCE

A CLOAK HE GAVE A BEGGAR

AND MANY OTHER STORIES, POEMS, EPIGRAMS, ETC.

AUGUST 1918

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To-day few smokers could be found who would not readily agree that the "De Reszke" *American* is the unquestioned Aristocrat among Virginia Cigarettes. Its qualities have won the whole-hearted admiration of many notable men and women. The following are a few more * of the many favourable opinions received:

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* *Numerous other opinions may be seen in other "De Reszke" advertisements.*

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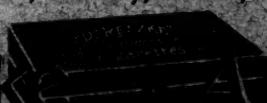

De Reszke American CIGARETTES

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

AUGUST, 1918

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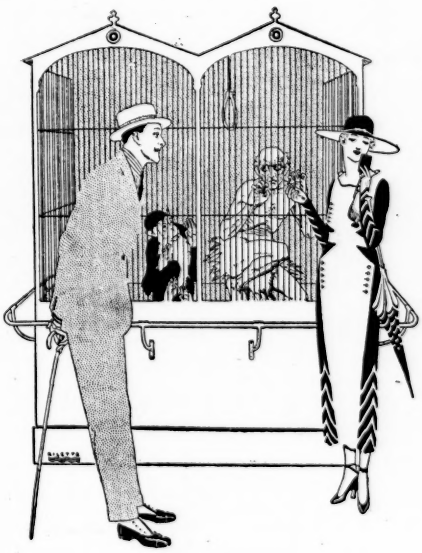
NOTE.—The advertisements of Pope and Bradley are occasionally sad.

THE NEW SACRIFICE.

BY

H. DENNIS BRADLEY.



"Calibanishment"

"This is as strange thing as e'er I looked on."
"He is as disproportion'd in his manners
As in his shape . . ."
—*"The Tempest."*

I AM SAD because necessity compels me to make a painful announcement. But I am in the position of the fond Victorian parent, it probably hurts me even more than it will hurt those to whom it is made.

There is a grave wool shortage. Drastic steps must be taken to preserve our precious raw materials. The slightest waste must be ruthlessly checked.

The manufacture of mufti has been reduced to a minimum. When Peace is declared there will not be enough to go round. The millions at present in khaki will be clamouring for plain clothes. Shall we say to them, "Now that you have fought for us you must freeze for us"? That would be poor gratitude indeed.

As a patriot I believe it my duty to conserve my material for the benefit of the Navy, the Army, and the few civilians who have been tried and found not guilty of being of national unimportance.

Therefore, sadly but firmly, strong in the knowledge that necessity is the mother of compulsion, I am compelled to announce that :

From this date I do not propose to admit on my books the name of any fresh client who is over the present military age of 51.

By this means a prodigious saving of raw material will be effected, for old men are so often naturally inclined to obesity in body if not in mind, and unkind nature so often endows with shapeless contours and convexities which consume a greater share of precious cloth than can be spared them in these critical times.

It has been and is a cruel world for the young, and I am afraid the future is going to be a very cold one for the old.

Whatever sacrifices and petty discomforts they are in their turn called upon to suffer, I know they will bear cheerfully in the comparatively comfortable security of their homes; bear them with that noble, indomitable, domestic yet martial spirit they have shown throughout the war, and which history will record to the eternal glory of their generation.

* * * * * *

To the men who have been and are national assets, to the younger generation to whom this country is looking for salvation now, and to whom it looks for a new and finer orientation in the future, the services of the House of Pope and Bradley are devoted.—14, Old Bond Street, London, W. 1.

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Coat and Skirt in a large range of good quality tweeds, coat cut on plain tailor-made lines, plain well-cut skirt with box pleats back and front.

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Sale Price, 7½ Guineas.

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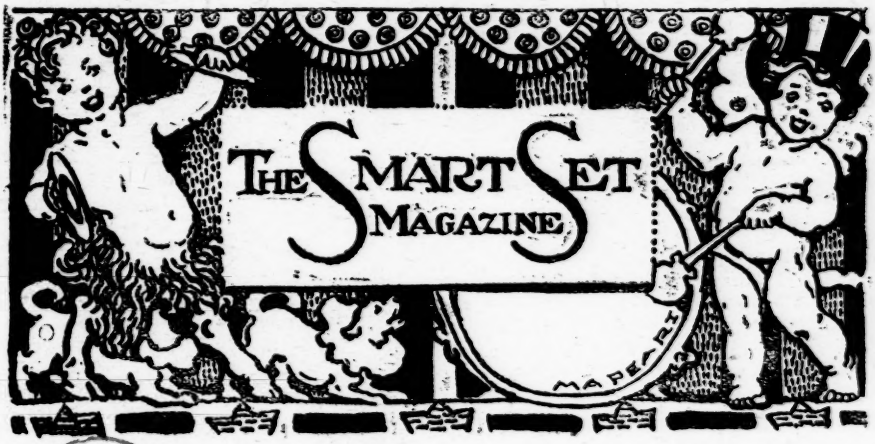
Vol. LV AUGUST, 1918 No. 4



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BIRTH CONTROL

By Harry Powers Story

SHE LOVED HIM

So

SHE flouted him
And flirted with his friends
And wrote him horrid notes
And always arrived late
When they went out together
And she broke off their engagement
Eleven times
And said
She wouldn't marry him
If he were the last man on earth
And she criticized his ties
And his sister
And the way he wore his hair
And she wouldn't speak to him
For days at a time
And she did everything
She could do
To make him miserable

HE LOVED HER

So

HE hung around
And held her hand
And gave up all his friends
And sent flowers to her
Every day
And proposed to her
Every couple of days
And dropped his clubs
And a lot of money
To her young brother
And he neglected his business
And wrote sonnets
About her wonderful eyes
And dreamed of her
Every night
And he did everything
He could do
To make her happy.

BECAUSE SHE LOVED HIM *BECAUSE HE LOVED HER*

So they were married and their first
Baby was a boy with freckles on his
Nose like his father had—but he had
All his mother's good points. . . .

MERCY

By William Johnson

I SAW on the street a little man bargaining with a boy who had three or four wretched mice in a cage. The boy pocketed a coin and handed the cage over to the little man, looking as much wonder as he did joy.

The little man took the cage in his hands repulsively, holding it well away from his body, but smiling a meek, glowing pleasure.

Interest and curiosity assailed me, and I stopped to study the acquisitor of so strange a property. His shoulders were stooped, his eyes small and blinking, his face unbelievably trusting and kind. Benevolence and mercy made personality in a figure that without them would have been waste clay of the potter's blundering. He was plainly a man who could bear to see no creature, however insignificant, in distress. I felt that I must know more of the processes impelling to an act so unusual. I laid my hand on his shoulder.

"Pardon my seeming impertinence," I said, "but will you tell me why you bought those mice from that boy?"

He seemed a little embarrassed, even frightened, as generous souls are apt to be when surprised in a kindly act. But he was evidently satisfied with his scrutiny of my face, for his smile returned and he answered:

"I'm going to take them home and let them loose in the house. I've had a number of boys trapping them for me."

I was overcome with emotion.

"Beautiful!" I exclaimed. "You extend your sheltering mercy to one of earth's poorest creatures, though its presence fills you with disgust. Tell me, what prompts you to do this marvellous, unusual thing."

His smile glowed with a tender soulfulness that made it almost beautiful.

"They scare hell out of my wife," he said.

SUNDOWN

By Elizabeth Sharp

OVER the hill the sun, shrouded in sombre haze,
Droops to the long line of telegraph poles,
A solemn Capuchin peering over an endless array of crucifixes.

THE DEFENCE OF ISAAC SMITH

By E. B. Dewing

PART I

"And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life,
"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,
"Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."—Ex. xxi. 23-25.

I

BUT the young men don't believe that any more, and even if they did it might not help me now. Yet my own life is little enough to give, they're welcome to whatever of it they can take. I am an old man sitting in a prison cell, with a door barred to a cemented passage-way, and I wait the judgment of the young men about me. For the world now is a world of young men. In comparison with them I sometimes mistrust myself.

My father was a Jew, my mother a Yankee. My name is Isaac Smith, and my store still displays the choicest stock of ornamental antiques to be seen on the Avenue. For sixty years I have upheld the law, overcome my circumstantial shortcomings, attained to wealth and power and respect. Is my accomplishment any the less true because Jim Paradis has gone where he may be suitably punished for his sins? Can one moment of living change the whole substance of a man—a moment in the balance against sixty years? I keep thinking in terms of decency, standing as though my weight were on the side of precept.

These pages may be taken as you please—a confession or a defence. Whatever they are, they have not the approval of my lawyers. I have already confessed to the bare fact of murder, beyond that I am warned to be silent. Mr. Wolfe has a very legal horror of the written word, Mr. Davis an equally legal sense of its importance.

The date of my trial is already set, my trial for the killing of my daughter Mary's husband. He and I were coming home from her funeral, we were in my car, driven by my chauffeur. The chauffeur drove to my house, stopped, alighted and opened the car door for us. Jim Paradis fell forward into his arms. There was a bullet through Paradis' head and another through his heart, and he must have gone the last of his journey alone, for I arrived an hour later, all wet and muddy from the spring weather. The chauffeur, Tom Farlie, is under arrest, charged with being my accomplice, but he had nothing whatever to do with the shooting of Paradis. I must make that clear, at the same time I am aware of being in a position in which my word counts for little.

Paradis sat in the front church pew with Mary's sisters and with me, and Mary lay in her coffin. White and cold and hard she lay. I hope never again to suffer the scent of flowers. Paradis' head was bent in prayer and he shed his crocodile tears. As he passed out, unseeing but not unseen, a woman whispered, what a handsome man! A flicker showed he heard. I remember him at the church door putting on a light overcoat over his new black clothes. My daughters and their husbands, his

brother, and he and I together, went to the cemetery. It was while returning from the cemetery that he met his death. He was a handsome man, even as his admirer had said. I try to judge him without prejudice, try to give his physical superiority its due. . . .

He was a coward and a liar, he was egotistical and self-indulgent, he was avaricious and dishonest, he was mean, he was narrow. I wouldn't have trusted him with the most trumpery gewgaw in my front window, and yet was forced to trust him with that which has proved more precious to me than life itself. He was of a type who receive the best attention in restaurants and railway stations. He was followed by a rather cloudy collection of stories, most of them uncorroborated, and then there were always his debts. I think if he were in hell he would owe the devil for coal. There were his debts and his looks and the thing which was, after all, the most noticeable thing about him—the remarkable co-ordination which existed between his motive forces and his muscles. He moved quickly and easily, he trod lightly on the balls of his feet, he had a natural balance generally confined to pugilists, circus performers and professional dancers. I recall him walking down the aisle of a Pullman car, the train was making about fifty miles an hour, the road-bed was none too smooth. One imagines a jungle animal picking a silent path over the brittleness of last year's twigs. Paradis went his way without a clutch or a lurch, the only other man who could have managed it as he did was the Pullman porter.

I admire savagery. I am a firm believer in the efficacy of the brute. As a man, I myself am insignificant, but in my dreams I grapple lions and ride in vizored state through conquered cities. I have an oriental taste for pageantry, and have succeeded as a merchant because I love the merchandise I buy and sell, love glitter and richness, bow before the trappings of the great. And all the more, because of this, do I despise the savage who has degenerated through an ill-digested contact with civilization. Nobody will ever know, I think, how I despised Jim Paradis—quite apart from any personal or individual reasons for hate. They won't know, because I am unable to tell them. Let us forget what I've failed to say. Sufficient that he was handsome and active. But so is a wolf hound, or a Hawaiian swimmer, or an eagle, or a snake twining upon a rock. He was blond and showed his teeth, he had a smile in a frowning face. For any further information, however, one might better have asked his wife. And he would have been glad at this inquiry, for he was the vainest man that ever lived.

He would have accepted even the ambiguous tribute of these pages with a degree of fortitude—better a celebration of his lacks than that he should go forever unsung. I beg his pardon for my own. I apologize for the poor quality of the paper to be bought here in jail—there is a rule against having such commodities sent in—and the pencils, which are execrable. Perhaps Paradis wouldn't think any of it was good enough, but it might be pointed out to him that many of these deficiencies—even my own—are in a measure his fault.

It has always been my wish to write a book, but without him it would have been a very different sort of thing from this. It would have dealt with the softer metals, silver and gold rather than the iron of prison bars. It would have been something with which pleasantly to possess my declining years and perhaps convey a little of their wisdom—pass it on to an unbelieving world—a world which treats of trade in terms of scorn. It would have been a crown to all my labours. And what sort of a crown is this? A confession of crime, a defence of it, an account of certain matters which are not altogether of this earth. . . .

II

PERHAPS my earliest memories should have first place. There was my New England mother and my foreign-born father, my school, my father's shop, my evenings of reading. I was finally taken out of school and set to work under a cameo cutter. I was an errand boy and then an under clerk at an oriental rug dealer's. You know the kind of young man I must have been, pale and small and dark—helping to unroll great figured carpets, writing down addresses on a convenient pad, presenting a bill politely, disappointing a customer with tact, not above taking a message or rubbing a table. Polish—that was it—it quickly grew into something deeper than a thing of table tops—something ingrained. It's the earmark of our calling—I never knew a successful shopkeeper without it. It's the thing which takes the place of being a gentleman.

I was spending a vacation with my mother's people when I met the woman whom I afterwards married. She was above me socially, slightly my elder and she taught school. But I had a highly developed instinct for the genuine as against the counterfeit. I was a strange, pale, fervid young man, only half a Jew, and my courtship prospered. My marriage helped me. There were lean years and years not so lean and at last the reaping of my reward. I moved to Fifth Avenue, though I was doing very well on Fourth; I profited and turned my profits back. Many's the time I've sent abroad to please a customer—sent abroad no further than my storehouse loft. God forgive me now. I could afford to hold exorbitantly my few fine pieces, depending for the daily bread and butter of my upkeep on goods of a second grade. But I must be pardoned this talk of the store—pardoned because the store is the only thing I am leaving behind me which I care very much about.

My wife is dead, my daughter, Mary, is dead; for my two surviving daughters I care, but not in that way. It was for their sake Mary sacrificed her proper youth. When my wife died Mary was a little girl—she was obliged to fill her mother's place and succeeded remarkably in doing so. She had a quite unchildish sense of responsibility. She watched over her sisters, tended them, struggled with them, and it must be admitted they were a credit to her pains. Beauties, she turned them out, their natural looks enhanced by a perfection of condition, and—what was yet more extraordinary—great social successes. Angels could have done no more.

Mary had a sense of values which is only born—that and the capacity of enduring boredom, a capacity commercially developed into the third generation. She had, too, something of the precision of her New England ancestors. A spot upon her linen or her conscience troubled her equally. It may have been in part an explanation of our worldly rise that in this age of carelessness Mary could remain uncompromising. Three-fourths Yankee, my children are, and one-fourth of the race supposed to abjure pork. Physically unmarked by the Orient, mentally—in Mary's case at least—I am not so sure. There was our house, which Mary kept. I used to think of Mary as living in a house three-fourths wall and one-fourth open door.

However, it is only fair to admit Mary's own satisfaction with what she did, and one must imagine this satisfaction going hand in hand with her self-abnegation and control. There were problems constantly presented. There was the high spirit of my daughter Dawn, inclined to recklessness, and there was the slow obstinacy of my daughter Lily. But it must be remembered that our name might have been Jacobson. My father's name was Jacobson and when he married my mother he had it legally changed to hers.

Lily finally married Aubrey Vie, a young man of wealth and fashion who has gone in for art. He paints por-

traits and finds in Lily a fitting subject. He said his wife has inspired him, but it seems to me she hasn't inspired him enough. She is pale like an early Florentine, tinted ivory and gold come alive—he misses all of it. Apart from his painting, I like Aubrey. Dawn, my youngest child, who conferred upon us the honour of marrying the son of Philip Lydekoop, is beautiful in a less gaze-widening way. She is roseate as her name, slender and sharp, and with eyes like the blue smoke from campfires at noon. Her marriage was the crowning glory of Mary's career. Dawn had so many opportunities to do worse. I should never have conceived of her as occupied with problems of State, siting upon platforms at political meetings, the champion of Causes, the staunch ally of Reforms. But Mary had a vision which I lack.

If she had done only half as well for herself as for her sisters she would have saved a vast amount of human pain. But what she did for them was done through the practical side of her nature, as a reasonable, reasoning being. She looked on coldly, judged wisely and brought about cleverly. What she did for herself she did stepping out through the open door of the house in which she lived, stepping out, stepping down. And yet Mary was hard. I think her very eagerness was part of her hardness. The soft, the tender, are heedful where they step, they look to their feet. I desire to treat her fairly, not to invest her—falsely—with the raiment of a martyr. She had been of necessity impersonal, had taken her pleasure, in a manner vicariously, through success. And then there came a time when success was not enough. All her denials, all her calculations, were so many forces pushing her forward into the hands—the arms—of Paradis.

But at that he could never have been worth to her the price she paid for him—not even at the first. She married Paradis, giving him this power of marriage, and why? I think my daughter Mary should have been a man. She was methodical, she was accurate, she had the sort of mind which takes naturally to lists and indexes and ledgers, and an executive intelligence of no mean order. That is to say, she would have graced manhood. If she had been a man I should have taken her into the store. If Mary had been a man, Paradis would have been an incident.

Paradis was a figure on the outer fringe of the circle in which Mary's wisdom had placed us. He had a general connection with finance and a position with a firm of mine promoters. I looked up his record as well as I could and unearthed some vaguely unsavory bits. His employers, the mine promoters, refused to commit themselves. I gathered together a number of unpaid bills. I blame myself for not having gone into all these matters more fully, but Mary was unmoved, whatever I discovered. It seemed to her outside the question.

If Paradis had been a lounger on a street corner and Mary had seen him, she would have stopped and brought him in—brushed him and dressed him, fed him if needs be, and presented him as her choice. And if, half way, she had repented of her ardour, he would have fumed and postured and beaten his breast, and she would have mistaken his mouthing for undying love and brought him all the way. I may have done him scant justice. The door of Mary's house was open wide when she walked out. And the sun was shining and the birds were singing and at night the moonlight was lying white upon the grass. The surf was striking on shore, the summer winds were breathing through the trees, the great plains lay flat to the dust. But at that, was it worth what is has cost? Mary has paid with her life—perhaps I shall with mine.

Though my lawyers tell me this is hardly likely. They think themselves clever enough to save me from murder in the first degree. Perhaps I shall have a term of years, perhaps escape altogether—be saved from the consequences of my act, turning back the

hands of the clock. They tap their fingers to their brows, whether to point their own intellect or my lack of it, I am not sure. They tell me not to discuss the legal aspects of my case. They may rest at ease, I am only too glad to get away from the activities of the District Attorney's office. They speak lightly of their term of years. You would think prison a summer resort or a club, and as the legal experience of prison is possibly greater than mine, I shall have to take their word.

My present abode may not be a good example—yet even here I have advantages which I must make the best of while I may. Here there is a courteous doubt of guilt—a doubt which money has power to resolve into a very general politeness. In the prison of their term of years there will be no doubt. But even here I can sense what that other prison would be like—the cumulative effect of the close walls and the barred doors. I am assailed at times by the cringing fear of an old man afraid of pain, afraid of hardship, afraid of the unknown. And then I think of Mary, and am brave.

She was brave. But then she was young. Mary's prison wasn't of stone and iron—gold, rather—her keeper didn't wear guard's clothes. Her sentence was a penalty pronounced, not for crime, not for death—for life. And then she found what she had thought was life wasn't life at all. For me the great key will turn the lock in the gate, and the gate will remain closed. I hope I am what I am through choice and "not through dread," as Kipling says. She wasn't what she had become through choice. For her the key had turned, the sunlit sky was gone.

I remember her so well in the years before her marriage. There was about her a sort of surface stiffness, a precision, as I have said, too exacting for a lazy generation, and then an oriental suavity superimposed on that which seemed to make her formidable. If my youngest daughter had eyes like the blue smoke from campfires, my eldest had eyes from blue to grey—the smoke that curls to heaven mixed with the leaping flame. In the years after her marriage they didn't hold flame. They were like eyes that had died in her face. But there was her stiffness and her suavity to the last. If Paradis had been an incident I wonder if the incident would have killed her?

In this age of hard metals there is something called scrap-iron—old pieces of wrought or cast iron, old or refuse steel. And so, when mechanical structures have outlived their usefulness, they become scrap. There is always a certain scandal in high places when battleships or buildings or other of the more important objects are scrapped before this period of outlived usefulness has been reached. It's the way I feel about my daughter. She was an exceedingly precious, finely adjusted piece of mechanism and she was thrown to one side as though she had been worthless. I refer to the general consequences of her marriage quite as much as I do to the mere fact of her death.

"With a garland of straw I will crown thee, dear love,
I will marry thee with a rush ring—"

Paradis was singing in a coarse, light voice and the lamps of the music-room shining yellow through their silken shades. But a rush ring wouldn't have bound her. Don't misunderstand—marriage is not the thing to be opposed, only the marriage of Paradis and Mary, and a world which—having bred a man like Paradis—then permits him to live upon its surface.

When he didn't like a thing, and there were many things he didn't like, he used to tell his wife so in ways denied to civilized man. But he never took into account the things she didn't like, and there must have been a number of those—towards the end perhaps those didn't matter. I only know the outer edges, what little I have chanced on and been told, and in my recital of even these I shall endeavour to respect tradition—in our present advanced civilization there are things which hardly bear the written word. Yet I have rea-

son to believe certain facts — facts which I must here set down. I know that Mary's death was the direct result of the premature birth of a child. And there I have reason to affix the blame.

"Thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye—"

Mary's eyes were dead in her face, they were like lead, they were like lead bullets which had wrought in death and been washed clean in blood. Mary's mouth was soft, as though the will in it were gone. Mary's head, held high and straight, was like a mask, a mask held up by children on the end of a stick. Through her marriage she was dead to me and now that her marriage is broken in death she is alive once more. It was given to me to watch her spiritual dissolution; I feel that now her spirit lives again. It may be an existence unrecognized by law courts, I only know I can hear her voice calling me. Sometimes I hear her voice, sometimes her laugh, I can hear the rustle of the papers on her desk, I can hear her talking with the secretary who used to come to her in the mornings and help her with her letters and the business of our big house. Sometimes I can hear her step on the great carpeted stair. Only the guard passing the door.

III

THERE was the music-room, softly lighted, and Paradis with his song:

> "Thy fro-ozen hea-art shall melt at my love,
> So tender-erly shall I sing."

Her frozen heart had melted at a far hotter fire than love. She was stunned, fettered, helpless to protest almost before she knew the need of protest. She was shocked into non-resistance. A love-marriage, hers was called. It is said that love is near to hate—at least love may turn with hate, as silver blackens with sulphur. I've often thought the end must have seemed long in coming.

I remember Paradis standing at the foot of his wife's bed—he was scared if ever a man was scared—and I remember the shabby, somewhat puzzled, and yet evasive little doctor whom Paradis had called in. Between them, I made out the word hemorrhage. It seemed that Mary had been ill for several days. Paradis had sent for me because he didn't know what else to do—I, obeying the summons, was utterly unprepared for what I found. I was as much dazed as Mary herself ever had been.

"A great pity," the doctor was saying, "a great pity—" and clasping shut a large instrument case. "Mrs. Paradis fell," he explained to me, "and of course in her condition a fall is a serious matter. But we hope for the best—that is to say, we hope the results will be no more serious than they have been already."

Mary was supposed to be asleep. The doctor's voice trailed off a little as he became aware that she had waked.

She lay there, looking at us, from one to the other, and there was that in her face which hadn't been in it for a long time—a surety, a knowledge, almost a look of triumph, and her lips were smiling. She lay in a tumbled bed in a disordered room. All about her was an ill-kept luxury, objects of ornament, of ease, grown ugly from misuse. There were stains and dust, the aimless confusion to be found in the litter of a savage camp, nowhere evidence of the exquisite austerity of Mary's natural habitat. But it was Paradis' room, not hers, it was from his pillows she looked up and in a voice subdued by him she spoke: "So you hope for the best, do you, doctor? What is your idea of what the best would be?"

Both the men were at her side. "You mustn't talk—absolute quiet—"

Her whole face was smiling now, and through her pallor glints played.

"That's what I think of quiet," she said, and as Paradis bent to her she raised her hand and struck him with the back of it full in the mouth. "Goodbye, and good luck!"

Her last word turned harsh and she died.

Paradis may have given back a part of his price then, with the doctor and myself standing beside him and seeing the hate in his wife's face.

The doctor was quick to give it a name.

"Delirium—under the circumstances, a perfectly normal reaction."

"What circumstances?" I asked.

It was put to me more fully what it was that had happened—or at least what the result had been.

"It was a pity to lose them both," the doctor concluded. Our lucidity was over and we turned to the immediate duties which death had imposed.

If I had that day to live again, I might not be where I am now and Paradis might be here in my stead. I am taking his punishment—and why? It's a question I shall never cease from asking. It is easy to look back coldly, though never so easy at the time. My daughter was dead, my son-in-law manifestly in fear.

"Mrs. Paradis fell," the doctor repeated. "She fell and struck a chair—the injuries she sustained—"

He drew back the bed covering and exposed the outworn body all bruised and discoloured.

He, who had seen so much of shame, shouldn't have seen that, too—giving me, as they looked, a quick, sidewise glance to observe the extent of my own observation—he shouldn't have been so near. Mary had been profaned enough. The doctor knew as well as I knew that there had been no fall. One disaster had followed another, the loss of the child, a hemorrhage carelessly stemmed, a blood in no condition to accept carelessness.

"If I had been called sooner," the doctor told Paradis, "I might have been able to prevent your wife's death."

The air cleared for the word of truth.

"I didn't know," said Paradis, and turned away.

It was one of the few times I ever recall being sorry for him. Fear had taken away his ordinary volubility, his bravado, his peculiar groundless insolence. Paradis had said he didn't know, and it was true. He groped. A little more and he would have grovelled. If he had broken—and he was too much afraid to break—or if he had become conspicuous in his grief, I might have gone out and summoned the police. As it was I found myself curiously helpless except along the most obvious lines. I settled with the frightened servant I found weeping in the kitchen, I gave five dollars to the superintendent of the apartment building, I functioned as I say, and yet felt a good deal as a man might feel who was beheaded and still lived.

The doctor, also, had work. There was the business of the undertakers, the death certificate, I believe other matters. He had been well paid—paid from Mary's purse open on the table—and his whole desire was to do what he had to do and leave. He was in fear as well as Paradis was—fear of being drawn into complications of which one suspected him of an unhealthy experience. He was furtive, he was hasty, though he fought against the appearance of either furtiveness or haste. I thanked him briefly, and because of his fear, I think, he had a tendency to prolong the interview. I remember him almost sociable and chatty.

In my house there was a stir such as there hadn't been in a long time. Dawn and Lily hovered about in crisp and, it seemed to me, unsuitably fashionable mourning. There was a constant subdued murmur, a passing and repassing, and the room—ordered and dim—where Mary lay. She had been brought home as a person might be from an accident, but now she lay in a sort of state, there were flowers on either side. I had always tried to keep her room as she had left it, the silver, the mahogany, the straight, white-banded curtains. I had always held in my heart the chance of her return. But not like this.

And hour by hour Paradis gained back his confidence. He grew to a respect for his wife he never had had be-

fore; she had at her command, even in death, a decency, a solid Fifth Avenue worth, which was used to guard him—it was not for him to ask why. No need now for shabby practitioners. There is a fable which concerns the wind and the sun. Both claim supremacy. A man in a heavy cloak walks by. The wind shakes the cloak and tears it and the man wraps it more closely about him. The sun merely smiles and the cloak is cast away.

The upholstering in my library sprang a little under Paradis' weight. I remember him critically fingering my choice of volumes—he was at home as I could never have been in another man's house—but what was Mary's was his. Three days, he was allowed, to the day of Mary's funeral. I wonder what he thought of in those days of grace? Mary had wished him luck. Did he ever think she had put a curse upon him with her luck? I should be willing to believe he feared the dark because of the unseen shapes it harboured, and the light on account of the images it showed. He started at the opening of a door, he held himself tense at the ringing of a bell. But hour by hour his fears left him, as I have said. I suppose I was grossly inadequate to the situation. Too late, I desired to protect her who, in her earlier years at least, had always been so well able to protect herself. I remember the little line of concentration on Mary's brow—the wonder of her competence, even as a child. It was she who had chosen the covering for the furniture with which Paradis made himself so free. Mary would have been as fine in the period immediately following her death as I myself fell short. I have said her spirit lives again—that is true—but one cannot expect of the spirit the consistence to be demanded of the flesh.

There was Paradis in the front church pew, Paradis standing at his wife's grave. The rain beat down upon his sleek bent head. His eyes couldn't leave the lowering coffin. I felt for him a twinge of pity, echo of the pity I had felt for him before. He stood to one side while I stepped wearily into my car and sat down, hunched a little, in the far corner.

"Get in," I said to him, "get in. I'll take you back to town."

I might as well carry it through—there was no need of imposing him upon my family.

The Lydekoop car waited for us to start first. We passed it, waiting, on the narrow road within the cemetery grounds, and I could see Lily's beautiful veiled head and the brightness of Dawn at the window. It was a distance of some twenty-five miles into the city, the roads were wet, and to reach the Harlem River Bridge took the better part of an hour. Lydekoop had waited for us, but after a while he went ahead, his man took chances with the mud, Lydekoop was always in a hurry. I knew my daughters planned to leave him at a convenient subway station in order that he might continue his journey even more quickly. They were to drop Vie at his studio and then come over dutifully to be with me. This at least was their plan, which to this point they fulfilled. They arrived in time to see the butler and the chauffeur carrying Jim Paradis up the steps.

I remember later their stricken faces—stricken as mere death could never do.

"Father—oh, father! We none of us liked him, but how could you? Tell us you didn't—that it's all a horrible mistake. . . ."

I sometimes think my crime against them was greater than my crime against him. It was my hand that shot him, shot him with the pocket pistol which I, as a jeweller, carry; but it was my hand, also, that tore down the fine, close fabric of social ease, public respect and good opinion which it had taken three generations to weave. If he deserved punishment there were those appointed by the law to punish. Why should I constitute myself his executioner?

I have put questions and I haven't answered them. You must bear with me. Bear with me as my daughters

bear. Their smart, crisp draperies rustle, their polished heels tap. Through the wire screening which divides us they look at me, half sorrowing and only half accusing. I feel a shame at their having to soil their daintiness and brush their bloom, to run the gauntlet of eyes accustomed to lesser sights. They are given a number and are escorted to a numbered room. I have the same number and am taken to my side of the same room. The screen is between. There is no passing of blocks of cells, no real penetration into the depths of the prison—for this much I am thankful. They tell me that in the entrance hall there are benches where those who are waiting may sit.

"Emigrants," says Dawn, "women with shawls over their heads and men without collars—"

She means other visitors, who, like themselves, have come to see their kin.

All the guards, wardens, keepers, prison employees have a certain look. It is something in the eyes and the hang of the head, a kind of tempered recklessness, a complete immunity against surprise. Newspaper reporters have it, sometimes, or barkeepers, or headwaiters. It is—I think—a disillusionment with humanity at large. But the men about a prison are not content to stop at that; they must take on a colour of their surroundings, the grey of stone rather than the red and white of life. And Dawn and Lily coming in among these, Dawn and Lily, with their warm, soft tones, their loveliness, the aura of their youth which they have never lost—it isn't congruous, it's part of the terrible nightmare strangeness which surrounds us. I often wish I had shot myself as well as Paradis—shot myself and hadn't balked. I don't know how I am going to get through the mere waiting. And I dream at night that these walls close in.

IV

THE chauffeur, Tom Farlie, has been released, the evidence against him being insufficient to hold him. I am glad of that; he was always a good boy, courteous and alert. But my interest in him is purely friendly—I am under no obligations of a more sinister nature. Of course the question might be raised of how it was he heard no shots. I offer the rather belated explanation that he wasn't with me all the time—he wasn't in the car. Once Farlie was down the road picking up a glove which I had dropped from the window, and, again, he was buying some sanwiches at a convenient inn. After both these expeditions he returned to find nothing obviously wrong. Paradis was silent—Farlie noticed that—and his coat collar up, his hat down. I looked tired—as was natural enough. When we reached the obstructions of city traffic there was occasion to stop several times—this would have given me my chance to slip away and he wouldn't have known that either. It's plain enough when it was that Paradis was killed, and that when Farlie returned to observe nothing wrong he must have been looking at a dead man. There was no further opportunity for scrutiny, as the glass behind the driver's seat was curtained.

Paradis' coat collar was still up and his hat down when he fell forward into Farlie's arms at my house door. His wounds were staunched with handkerchiefs, there were no signs of struggle. I must have been prepared, have had at least the beginning of a plan—all of which is against any legal clemency. I was no murderer killing in the heat of passion. The handkerchiefs, bound with a metriculous care, almost a woman's touch, and the arrangement of my victim's body—inconspicuous with its back to the light—and later its rearrangement to fall forward through the opening door, the door next the curb by my house—all this bespeaks a full appreciation of what the situation was. So far, my defenders have little to encourage them, they may tap their brows as they choose.

But the sky clears. The effect of my care is set at nought by my return. I had so carefully prepared the way for leaving, had left—had left behind me

the bomb of mystery and shock. And then I had come back as casually as from an afternoon's stroll. Why all this pains, this additional and grisly labour, for nothing?

Somewhere my plan had broken. I didn't intend to come back any more than I had intended to shoot Jim Paradis. I was going to a hotel—preferring that to my immediate proximity. I should have registered under my own name, been shown to my room, locked the door, written a note and then shot one of my remaining cartridges. But I found I wasn't ready to die. I got as far as a hotel desk, a hotel where I wasn't known. The clerk took in the quality of my clothes. "Room and bath, sir? Nice room and bath for six dollars on the third floor."

"Yes, that will do—" And then I turned on my heel. I felt the eye of the clerk upon me as I went out.

Outside I paused.

"Taxi, sir?" said the starter.

"No!" I vociferated, and walked in the direction of my house at the other end of town.

I wandered forth through the spring rain. I went by way of the park and I remember sitting down on a bench and watching some thirsty sparrows at a puddle. I desired the smell of the earth as I hadn't desired it since youth.

Spring was in the air, a sense of growth and life, a warmth to drive away the colds of winter. The ground was alive underneath my feet, the bare trees—washed by rain—showed along black branches the first traceries of green coming out through breaking bark. As we grow older the changes of nature no longer affect us. The morning comes, the night falls, the seasons wax and wane. But we build ourselves houses and fires, wear clothing suitable to the weather, and hardly turn in our pursuit. In youth nature uses us, she brings to our subjugation all her arts, smiles at us, laughs, caresses. In age she has no further use, she throws us off as the dead leaves are cast by the trees, we do what we do without her aid or hindrance, our independence at once the reward and the penalty of years. But a penalty which without years we should never be made to pay.

It was one of the counts I had against Paradis that Mary was old before her time. Her staring sight had no care to observe the greens of spring nor the snows of winter, her senses were dull wind and rain. At her age, spring still swayed me—still was more to me than a mere imaginative afterglow. The needs of youth are met and lessen, and then age comes.

I remember myself as a boy, spending my Sundays in the country, and lying in the grass, pulling at the tiny roots, crushing them in my hands. It's many springs since I have lain upon the grass. We are supposed to forget, but I find I have not forgotten. Through my prison pallor I colour at the way in which I am carried back. Yet I was a good boy as boys go, boys in a big city, successful young merchants with manners and wisdom and a few dollars jingling in their pockets. But the dollars weren't enough. Many things I could afford I didn't want—didn't want enough, that is, to sacrifice my pride—there was a constant balance between my pride and my desire.

I don't know what Mary's mother ever could have found in me. It must have been the riddle—or the answer to it—proposed by the Sphinx. She took me, a raw boy in spite of my finish and my polish, and she made a man of me. I think I have said she taught school. She was better looking than this fact implies. My immediate and marked devotion occasioned her neither alarm nor surprise. I remember a parting at her garden gate, and finding myself with her hand in mine. It was a strong, square-fingered hand, not even very feminine, but white and well kept. I looked at it in mine and then I raised it to my lips, which piece of impertinence elicited from her no response, either of acquiescence or of anger. I became aware then—as I walked away—that she was the woman for whom I had been waiting.

But I'm telling now of spring, and of my last hour under the sky. I sat on the park bench, and nature—in whose affairs I had been meddling—bared her breast to me, showed me her glories. The rain stopped, the wind rose, the sun peered through hurrying steeps of cloud, the man-made stone of curving walks reflected prisms beneath my feet as at last I made my way onward.

For an hour I was on such terms with nature as I hadn't known in a longer time than I should care to say. I—a little man in a damp overcoat and a ruined silk hat, a little man with a carefully trimmed grey moustache and gold-mounted eyeglasses—I should have walked like Hercules with a forest tree uprooted for a cane, I should have been clad in a lion's skin and crowned with poplar leaves. Hercules, too, had killed. He murdered his children and his enemies, he murdered those who had once been his enemies and those who might become so. And in the end he died for his sins, and what of him was immortal was raised to heaven in thunder and smoke. Death was everywhere—Mary's body—not her spirit—under the newly spaded earth, and Paradis with my bullets in head and heart—death and the glorious spring. I went to my house and the door was opened at my coming. Strange men commanded my privacies, men with small heads and broad shoulders, men who walked lightly and quickly on the balls of their feet, even as had walked Paradis himself.

PART TWO

"Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my head stood up;

"It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes. . . ."—Job iv. 15, 16.

I

Job with his images—me with mine. I find in the Bible human experience paralleling much with which I myself have struggled. I read verse after verse without having to make any mental readjustments whatsoever. Something deep, something racial out of the past, is stirred within me. Here I am nearer to a belief in God than ever I was in church or tabernacle. The words of the prophets have meat of a quality not to be found in that bought through the prison restaurant. There is wisdom. For the purposes of this narrative I need wisdom. You must figure me here, overtaken by disaster, trying—against odds—to articulate the truth.

I sometimes think that truth is not the noble companion of justice and of right she is so generally credited with being, but a jade, who lures us and escapes us. She leads us by devious ways, she shuts a gate directly in our path. Tell the truth, we are taught—yes, in so far as we can decipher it. I flounder in pursuit of the truth, I gasp for breath as the pace quickens. I tell my story as I can. There are matters I feel I have not made sufficiently clear. I wish to emphasize the extraordinary culmination of my own feeling and my daughter's feeling against Paradis. And I think the time is ripe to make quite definite the way in which, since her death, Mary has come to me. I should be commonly set down as being haunted—a condition I may have failed to clarify.

Mary's spirit hovers, her image is before me—an image as real to me as though she shared my cell. It seems as though her hands brush my face. She comes to me in my dreams and gives me courage for the days ahead. I commit to her my cause. I hope it is the last burden she will ever have to bear, but she can endure because she understands. Not through words, but through a kind of thought which joins with my thought, she tells me of the fulness of her tolerance. I pray to her to grant me a little of her knowledge, and sometimes it seems my prayers are answered. I see with her eyes, hear with her ears, tread paths I never have followed in the flesh. I return to flesh

and rage at prison walls. And Mary tells me there were times when she would have welcomed the security of walls about her.

Mary's hair falls dusky about her shoulders and her brow gleams white in the dimness. She says we all have sinned and we all must pay, each in our degree. How must Jim Paradis pay? Is death enough, and is his death my sin? And Mary is free, and is done with paying. Does that imply she is free to sin again? And what of Mary's child, who never breathed? I often think there is a child folded in the arms of the figure who comes to me, and then I see there is no child. Mary is a mother's name, and she was neither mother nor Magdalen. What does she mean when she says we all have sinned? What does she know that I do not? If I knew all Mary meant—all she knew—I should be willing to let that which they call The Chair, at Sing Sing Prison, have its way of me. But after that I *should* know. And meanwhile my daughter taps the wisdom of the ages for her teaching. Even as a girl, sitting at her broad desk with her budgets and her ledgers and her lists, even then she seemed to have at her command avenues of information denied the less fortunate.

The whole of life rushes together, Mary tells me. One conceives divisions of energy and being, dimensions here unknown. You have seen what occurs among material things when a juggler keeps a number of balls in the air together—well, it must be like that, carried to a degree. Mary is here, and it may be that she is somewhere else also—she may have power to project herself, throw rays of herself in varying directions. It would be like a phonograph with diverging horns. But I think her presence rests as much with me as it does with her—there are times when something within me enables her to come—a window opens and she can look through, and I can look through. We get, mutually, a kind of vision, and then the window shuts.

There must be, in Mary's world, liberties and freedoms having neither restriction nor consequence; these presuppose a lack of barriers. Perhaps the human barrier is the most difficult to break. And yet we, in this world of our own, are given the capacity to kill—I speak of the physical capacity which it is ours to exercise. And even though we ourselves refrain, physical conditions are always responsible for death. Physical conditions—Mary says I make too much of them!

If I do, why then all my life has been a mistake. I have bought and sold in the markets of the world, I have dealt in earthly treasure. I have taken the scroll-work from palaces and the gods from temples in order that the rich, by whose favour I myself am rich, may be framed in a grandeur they could not have attained without me. I have discovered rare draperies and hung them in windows to temper the light of heaven. I have turned back time itself to recreate the beauties of lost arts. I have garnered lovely and curious objects, splendid ornaments, jewels for a woman's skin, clasps for a man's book. I have despoiled sword-hilts of their silver and bartered with princes for the drapings on a wall. I have done all that and more—pandered to the pride of the eye, exchanged for gold the tangible handicraft of man. There has been my own life, outside of the means by which I have kept it. There are my younger daughters and there is Mary, and my wife who was not always dead. I try to furbish the links of the old chains which prove me of earth, and I never forget what I have already said, that we in this world are given the capacity to kill—one it has been at once my privilege and my presumption to have used. I shot Paradis until the breath was gone from him and his body rolled over against mine. And yet Mary tells me I make too much of physical conditions.

If I could come and go like her, disregarding locks and keys, coffin lids and good brown earth, I might be able

to share with her her contempt. She scorns. Why shouldn't she? And yet there are earthly chasms which she now cannot bridge, and for which she has not been above accepting my assistance. Her superiorities I shall grant, mine she must allow me. For what is she now but an image, a ghost, what could she ever prove herself to be except a figment of my own deluded mind? And as for me, I have lent her myself, I have given her the remaining good out of my life.

I wonder if this whisper from another world, which is all that is left to me of my daughter, has a memory of itself day by day, whether time exists, or the recollection of every act merges to a general understanding—and if it has any more murders for me to commit before I am done with paying for the one? I have no consciousness of wrong, the law has taken it. I sometimes think a sense of guilt comes only when we have never been called upon to expiate our crime. From Lady Macbeth on, there is the tradition of unwashed blood upon the hands, but I find my own as clean as ever they were, barring the rigours of the prison soap. Paradis' hands were the hands of blood, they must have befouled everything they touched.

Paradis, with his smiling lips and frowning eyes, his slim head, narrow from ear to ear, and the weak coward's chin and the splendid shoulders. . . . I remember how Paradis thought himself safe, but the young man went too fast—faster, by far, than Farlie drove us back to town—and the lessening of his doubt, which released his tongue. He had large plans for the future. He was still young—why shouldn't he admit his life before him? One fancies Mary as a beautiful memory, a sorrow, a grave kept green.

Paradis had never understood women, he realized that—now it was too late. His tone was increasingly confidential; I half expected him to assure me that after all my daughter had not died in vain. He was dissatisfied with his present work, he had a friend who urged the claims of lumber, there still were forests in the North. Ah—that was work for men! This living in the city—one only went back instead of forward.

With me, of course, the situation was different. I had my friends, my reputation, my fruits of fortune; there was my sumptuous house, the luxurious vehicle in which we were returning from our sad errand. Never had I looked upon my advantages with so cold an eye.

As I have said, the young man went too fast. But at least he helped me to a discovery. I realized that which I had been slow in learning — Paradis was a fool. However, there are worse things, as anyone knowing him well enough would have vouched.

"Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground—"

I confess to moments when my opinion of my daughter shrinks small.

What did she think she was doing when she married a man like that?

I used to hear them in the music-room, which was directly below my library. I could hear Paradis eternally talking, and then he used to walk the full length of the room, from the folding doors to the windows and back again. There was in that the satisfaction of the man's grace. Perhaps everyone has the right to his own downfall. Mary was a woman grown—I couldn't have stopped her, not then. I could hear their laughter joined. And Mary at the piano, playing softly:

"My lodging is o-on the co-old, cold ground,
And hard, very hard, is my fare——"

It must have been exceedingly hard at that time. Perhaps Paradis walked so much because the music-room was not furnished in a manner to accommodate him otherwise. I was trying some experiments in the epoch of Louis XVI. and had succeeded in obtaining some chairs which had first graced the Tuileries, a table and sofa attributed to Reisener, Gobelin hangings and some silk embroideries designed by de la

Salle. The piano was the sole anachronism, and I think its clear mahogany helped me in producing my effect. There was the composure of a past age, even the yellowed lights shed a radiance lacking warmth.

If I could make you see it as I still can see it! The piano and the shaded electricity, and, for the rest, treasure which might have been filched from the Louvre—the experiment of an antiquarian, the private showroom of a merchant, to be used as a background for courtship, a shelter inhabited and informed by two imperfect and modern products of an imperfect and modern civilization, Jim Paradis and Mary Smith.

There was Mary, dressed as she always was, a bit severely, and yet with a richness of fabric hardly suitable to girlhood. I remember her much-coiffed sheen of hair that glittered like a black satin turban about her head, a crown for eyes and brow. Something a little inscrutable in her eyes was repeated in her smile. But the light of love surrounded her, an aura outside her finite grace.

> "That which grie-eves me more than all
> Is the co-oldness o-of my dear."

Mary, fingering the age-old melody with a delicacy and a repression which always characterized what she called her strumming. And there was Paradis, blustering and voluble as a boy, and yet somehow not boyish, bleaker in his depths than the room itself, but with a kind of surface heat, a southern flash of teeth, a piratical lilt even when he sang. I could see them both as I passed up the stair, and the vision held through the long evening. I took my ease after the hard day, reading, resting, smoking my mild and fine cigars, stretching my scantily covered bones to the comfort with which my industry had rewarded me, listening to the laughs and the murmurs and the footsteps.

I may have represented my daughter as being too easily swayed by the fiercer emotions, but if I do I wrong her. She was fundamentally calm—calm in a sense that women like Dawn and Lily never are calm—deep as the deepest currents of glacial streams. She may have had a low opinion of quiet, but she herself was quiet.

I recall an evening long before the coming of Paradis when she and I were at a Paderewski concert. The auditorium rocked in melody, music dripped from the pianist's fingers like water turned to jewels, great harmonies—the roars and silences of outer space—were echoed and held. And Mary, leaning forward in her seat, so still that for a moment I though she had fainted. . . .

Mary was like that, emotion quieted her—relaxed the bristling edges of her nerves. Hers was a temperament to have blossomed on the field of battle. But battle can be heard and seen, we suffer hunger and cold, the pain of ill-healed wounds, but if we are suited to battle—as I say that Mary was—our spirit is ever warmed at an everlasting fire. The price that Mary paid for her adventure was of the spirit first. The soul may sicken and again grow strong, the body has but one life. "For the wages of sin is death," says Paul.

But there must be distinction, even in death—we all must die, and surely not all of us deserve avenging justice. Is the chance of hell what makes the fear of death? Mary tells me it is the fear of change. For her death was escape. Does she mean green pastures and flowery fields?

II

THE keepers say I talk to myself. To whom should I talk—to the walls, the water faucet I am lucky enough to possess, the wooden seat grown smooth from many sitters? If I ever am free to return to my house, I shall abolish from it all locks, all lattices and all frosted glass. They call this jail The Tombs, on account of its architectural gloom. The walls are thick and rough,

the stone flagged paving of the court is after the design of a past day when prisoners walked shackled and the stones were worn to the uneven limping of their feet. Men were lowered into reeking pits, fed upon sour bread and stale water, scourged and tortured. One sees some ancient Moloch, weary of the sacrifice, gathering and keeping his superfluous victims for a future burning. It is as if the antique dealer had been cast back into the period of his own antiques.

We are alive and yet entombed, we have committed the sins of earth and yet heaven and hell are at the turning of the corner. The gates of justice creak, unoiled. It is only Mary who can open them without noise. Mary escaped from her prison. She came forth, fine and free, she died with a strange blessing of her lips. Perhaps, instead of striking Paradis, she should have held him close, and with her last breath assured him of her love. Perhaps he needed no assurance.

One comes back, all the time, to why she ever married him. He must have revealed himself in a thousand ways even before it was too late. She had dreamed, I think, and having dreamed must dream to the end. There were the beckoning glories of human experience, the oyster of the world awaiting her convenience.

I try to span the gulf of feminine complexities—it's a gulf no man has ever crossed. There is the question of love. A man might often wonder what a woman means by love, what other love there is for her except in motherhood. There is an essential vanity which Mary lacked, and through which most women are led into love—they demand of it that it shall give them an audience, and perhaps Mary would have got along with Paradis better if she had been no exception to this rule. I have always thought vanity played a far greater part in the world's making than it is credited with playing. But what I have thought about the world's making—it doesn't matter now. I am an old man, and what a place the world would be if it were according to my wisdom!

My wisdom is negligible, it is my failure of which I think. My cell—day by day—does not become in any respect more pleasant, and yet I do not complain. There is a poetic justice in my being where I am. Who else was there to guide my daughter? And I failed in my trust. It might be said it was she who failed me, she left me, she went to serve strange gods. It wasn't because I couldn't persuade her against an individual that I failed. I should have begun before. I had made her my companion and my friend, she by her natural qualities lending herself to such a relationship; but there was not enough between us of the teacher and the taught. There were so many ways in which she didn't need me—often I needed her—I hesitated to impose my own meagre knowledge upon one herself so well equipped. I was too thankful and too disposed to let it go at that.

I must endeavour to be lucid. I never recall Mary at a stage of development when there was need of telling her—for instance—that babies didn't come in shoe boxes. But I should have been able and eager to supplement her comprehensions with the kind she couldn't possibly have had. Our talks should have been on my part at once more intimate and more didactic. I should have sent her forth with ears open, have given her at the least a background against which the tribulations to which humanity is heir might have taken their proper value.

Mary says we all have sinned. I am inclined to think I must have sinned the most. Mary says we all must pay. I have paid again and again. The people about me think my sin began and ended with murder; they little know how murder was in itself but part of my payment. They little know I have paid as high for that which I have left undone as for anything I have ever done.

It seems to me in looking back that I let situation after situation slip

through my hands. As far as Mary and Mary's affairs are concerned, it is as if I had stood by the roadside and helplessly watched the progress of some Juggernaut of fate—a progress which I could at any time have stopped. At the end, I remember Paradis sitting at ease beneath my reading lamps, and how, in the face of a seemingly personal crisis, I myself looked on, as it were, from the outside.

I felt a terrible weariness with it all. I might have been a beggar slinking on my own doorstep, brooding numbly in the cold comfort of reflected warmth, and in a manner wondering at that warmth—it was so foreign to anything which I myself could have conceived. I wondered at the bright activity, the almost pretentious cheerfulness. Being the chief mourner gave Paradis a sort of caste of which he was not slow to take advantage. Even his brothers-in-law, Vie and Lydekoop, were forced into a sort of fellowship, and they had never been on particularly easy terms. But I recall their friendly commiseration.

I had the trick of seeing it altogether —Mary, with the flowers at her breast, and Dawn and Lily, soft and quick, their little white frills breaking like spray against the sombreness of their grief. I saw the members of my household—its different rooms and offices—I came upon the butler, at work in his domain, inclusive of pantry and sideboard, at the same time I was aware of the labours of the housemaid in the upper regions. They were all intent upon themselves with only half an eye and ear to death. I visited the store briefly —my presence was demanded—and I might have been a stranger, a customer, for the new view I had, even though my practised senses were awake to aspects a stranger could never have perceived.

The store had always had for me a supreme importance, but now it took its place. I marvelled at the competent interest of my assistants, and at the clerks who could go on, day after day. I had a new view of it all. . . . I remember my intense distaste at having to face the general sympathy, I could feel the unobtrusive pause, the very human listening hang, and seemed to push my way through crowds. The crowds were a decorator and a stock boy and a handful of clerks, and—in a far corner—a lady who was looking at a bit of carved teakwood. It was an antique piece, showing in its form evidence of the Ming dynasty. She was discussing it as a possible handle for a parasol, and I say now as a merchant accustomed to the vagaries of the rich, that a very handsome handle it would have made. But I wouldn't let her have it.

I stopped in passing. "Pardon me, madam, the carving is not for sale!"

It was marked in plain figures, fifty dollars. I told her it was a mistake, it belonged to me—I couldn't let it go.

She asked, very naturally, who I was.

"I'm Mr. Smith."

"I'm Mrs. Jones. If your things are not for sale, good-bye!"

I was told by a petrified clerk which Mrs. Jones she was. I believe the report spread that I wasn't quite myself. I was really more than myself. The store took its place as I have said, yet never before had it been so completely within my grasp. The way I worked that day, arranging my affairs seemingly with an eye to the future, is a point in favour of deliberate planning for the shooting of Paradis. And yet there was my inconceivable treatment of Mrs. Jones—no one outside the mercantile world can fully appreciate just how inconceivable that was. The Ming carving was taken out of stock, a superstitious value is now attached to it, and I am told it adorns the desk of my lawyer, Wolfe. Who knows? It may contain the virtue said to be transmitted through the touch of a hunchback's hump.

It is against odds that the lawyers are working out a line of defence. They have before them one main chance. I was crazed from the shock of my daughter's death—crazed with grief—and brooding as I had over the

marriage of which I was known to have disapproved, I shot Paradis. An old man, mad with sorrow, killing in a burst of uncontrolled rage him whom —in his unbalanced condition—he held responsible for this sorrow (this would be about as far as anyone would get in direct accusation of Paradis). Was such a man to be treated as a murderer? I could foretell the attitude Davis would take before a jury.

There would by my former character to be considered, the respect in which I had formerly been held, my industry and my success. And as for Paradis, my lawyers are too clever to go too far in defamation of the dead, he would be but slightly scored. But comparisons, invidious as these are, exist even though unspoken.

"This unfortunate marriage, preying for years upon the mind of the devoted father—a devotion very materially shown—and then the suddenness of Mrs. Paradis' illness and death—the magnificent intellect of Isaac Smith broke under the strain—was shattered as irreparably as would be one of Mr. Smith's own exquisite vases dropped upon a marble floor. We have a broken man—broken, I say, like a smashed vase—we ask that he be placed in some private hospital where his needs can be properly attended, where his last years can be passed in peace."

It would seem, the way Davis would put it, to be a reasonable request. Time enough for the irreparable part of it afterwards. I am regarded hopefully, depended on to appear more insane than I am really thought to be.

I am under the constant surveillance of learned doctors of the mind who are familiar with it in every degree of sickness and health. They watch my reaction to the most accidental reference, talk to me and question, mentally they try to catch me up—catch me as they catch me physically. This is one of the ways by which it is brought to my attention that I am no longer in private life. I have to make, in all this, the mental readjustments necessitated by the peculiar fact that the kindest thing anyone could do for me would be to swear to my complete disintegration. It is only my enemies who desire to find me sane.

Among those who make a little less the weight of my solitude—whatever else they do—there is a Dr. Wells, whom I should welcome under far less dreary conditions than the present. He is amusing, intelligent, highly informative. His information on all subjects is so much more comprehensive than my own, and yet he consistently takes the attitude that I can add to it. He says a doctor must have all the facts there are.

Wolfe and Davis urge upon me this same point, a lawyer's knowledge must be complete—then he can twist it to the ways of the law.

But Dr. Wells isn't concerned with law—truth perhaps. He wants to know why I am writing a book. That I can't answer offhand; I warn him, however, he won't find it crazy. He replies he has no desire to do so—he's for the State—I have no reason to doubt his word on this, but I can't believe him against me. He reads my book here with a kind of smile under his sandy moustache, he even deigns to praise, finding my natural talent worthy of a more spirited cause.

"Such a pity—" he says.

I am surprised he has left within him any aptitude for pity. I should think he would feel scorn rather than compassion. We are such poor creatures by the side of him. He glows with a quality of health like a child's, his eyes have a child's clear, uncompromising gaze. And yet he bears rather more than his share of the world's burden, there passes before him in endless procession all the human frailities. I have asked him how, with all the sights he sees, he keeps his gaze so clear. I should think what he has seen would confuse and foul his vision. There must be, within himself, a substance—chemical and antiseptic—which denatures the harm he sees. He has reached a mark which he says should be reached by all of us, has at-

tained a sort of balance, is proved and tested. I wonder if to be so proved you have to go through fire? Then, if you are able, you survive.

In stating the doctor's case I state also at least the hypothetical case of my daughter Mary. I wonder if her life with Paradis might have been for her the shriving flame if she had had the marrow to see it through? The doctor says it's a drug he would hesitate to recommend. But he wants to know more of that life, I doubtless think I've told him more than I have.

III

As for what I've told, the will must be in part accepted for the deed. I know that I am neither clear enough nor simple enough, but enveloped in a cloud—a veil—of emotionalism. And I haven't even the feminine relief of tears. There is a film over my eyes through which I still strive for this thing I have called truth. I flounder in truth's pursuit, I miss altogether a fact I should have been at pains to record—and find myself in possession of a broadness of understanding even more difficult to report.

I have had times of blaming Mary. In the past I have been bitter against her. But now I grant her everything. In the past I have wondered why it couldn't have been someone other than Paradis who held the match to the high explosives she had been so long in storing. There were mates she might have found. She might have allowed me a part in her search. There were young men I have known for years, have guided and trained—men who have never fallen below the high standard of my faith. Why couldn't it have been one of these? Their virtues might have held romance far longer than did Paradis' sins. But I'm not considering the wearing qualities of the cloth, I'm dealing with the sheen, colour and design when I admit I now see that these young men wouldn't have done. I grant my daughter everything.

Mary went out of my house a bride, pale as the silver monogram of her dressing bag, straight as the bow strings of the violins which sounded her wedding march. One step, she seemed to take—she was so swift—from the house to the waiting car, and then she turned, shielding her face from the shower of rice, and waved to us who stood to see her go. She was gallant, even in her folly.

But I have no desire to make her motives other than they were. There is far too much idealization of the tender passion, and when a girl like Mary finds out love we are taught to take off our hats, conduct ourselves as though in the presence of a holy thing. It's a worship for which I have little use; I am half a Jew and therefore credited with certain simplicities. . . .

I remember Mary as a little girl, sitting on the nursery floor and reading a profusely illustrated child's edition of the Arabian Nights. She was twenty-six years old at the time of her marriage to Paradis, but in matters of the heart she had travelled but a short way from that. First the Arabian Nights—then Paradis. His is the kind of figure about which imagination plays. Mary's eyes were trained to ornament and her memory stored, she demanded that her imagination be set off. Fortunately, many women are not so exacting in this matter of romance—they weave their own, making a glorious creature from insignificance—but my daughter wasn't that sort of woman. I had no reason for ever thinking that she would be.

It will be seen I have for her a lurking sympathy. I, too, have had adventures. I have taken them late in life, I hasten to say, but my appetite is whetted and I question if I should ever again be content in my former seclusion. I have gone through sorrow, felt the arm of the law heavy upon me, groped in byways, been blinded by the light—the light that never was on sea or land—it has shone for me in place

of the sun. I have seen lands never reached by keel or camel. Mary has spoiled me, she has given me a standard of adventure the equal of her own, which in life she never realized.

Civilization has not dried from our blood certain memories, certain longings. And we who are in the ruck of civilization, who do not fare forth, flying or diving, exploring deathless snows, studying stars from mountain-tops, find our old longings hungry. I have repeated many times I am half Jew, half Yankee. What better background for adventure than that? Jews and English have been wanderers—Mary and I are merely bearing out our heritage. The old sea rovers used to be heartened for their voyages by tales of strange peoples, magic waters of youth, treasure loose for the picking. But we have dealt in greater wonders than they ever dreamt. Greater wonders—greater fears. . . .

It was natural enough that Paradis' marriage should have had an aftermath of fear. He himself was a coward, he had even taken from Mary what bravery he could—for she who had left her father's house so gay must have passed through many transmutations before she returned to it as she did—and at the end—his end—it was only meet there should have been more to fear than any fear he himself had brought upon his wife. I remember the days Paradis had to himself, when his fear wavered and grew less. It might seem a far cry from those back to the day of his wedding.

He and his bride knelt to receive the blessing of the Church. Mary wasn't afraid then. As she rose from her blessing her soul looked forth. She wasn't the picture-book bride Lily had been, or the glorious bit of youthful loveliness which had gone to the altar in the person of my youngest daughter, but she had—for all her lacks—a kind of spiritual grace. And there was Paradis, as white and as ill at ease as had been many a better man than he with his bride upon his arm. But his lips were back in the smile he couldn't help, the smile his dull, defiant eyes belied.

I don't know why his eyes shouldn't have softened as he looked at Mary, who waited a moment while he thought to offer her his guidance. I suppose a caliph hated by his harem—even Bluebeard himself—must have his moments of humanity. Marriage, even at its worst, must bring certain humanizing touches. I can't believe that Paradis was a better man then than he was in the days to come. He was a monarch ruling through dread and at the end the dread was turned. There was that which held him as he watched his wife lie dying, and beyond that still other dreads. . . .

Mary comes to me sometimes as a little girl, sometimes I hear her as a child calling to her playmates. Sometimes the fact of her presence startles me from sleep, and yet I can see nothing nor hear nothing. And again it is as if she had opened the door of my cell and stood by me and I could hear her talking almost as I used to do in my library at home. At times such as these there is almost no strangeness, she is friendly and familiar, unmarked by the distance she has come. But she didn't come to Paradis like that.

The earth was still warm from the spade when Mary came. The track of the hearse wheels was still plain in the road. The windows of the room where she had lain were still thrown wide to admit of cleansing air, the aisle of the church down which Paradis—bereaved—had walked was being swept for the feet of a bride. Mary's garments were a grey glory about her, her face was a white wraith, her eyes shadows. She was out of the fog and the mist and the rain, she was an angel with a flaming sword, the angel Michael fighting the dragon.

It is hard now, in the view of my more recent memories of my daughter, for me to believe in that day, not so long past, when to my earthly eyes she was grey lightning—she was swift and

hot as the breath of flame, she was the spirit of vengeance sent by the God of our Fathers demanding life for life. She rose from the grave and bade me do that which she herself could not. And who was I to disobey her commands? I was the merchant, the jeweller, the weakling—grief stricken and no longer young—who had always made too much of physical conditions. But having dealt in treasure, I had treasure then to thank and the guarding of it—the exigencies of my calling—which happened to provide me with an instrument of death.

Mary was compensated then for any submissions of the past. I have said she was grey lightning. Perhaps the earth colour clung to her garments, or the colour of the rain which rains between the worlds. She wrapped Paradis like fog, she held his head straight and horror-struck while I placed a second shot. She was revealed to him as well as to me. He died in frozen horror—in a fear so great that mortal fears would seem like the playing of boys with a sheet and a pumpkin. I shall never forget. I am not sure I want to forget. People talk about forgiveness who have nothing to forgive.

I remember fumbling in my pocket for the little pocket pistol—black, it was, and checkered for a better grip. Paradis was talking and the talk died in his throat. "Life in the city—ah—what was it?—" There was death in the city—or near it—even less to his liking.

Either wound would have been mortal. Mary waited close for me to staunch them. Mary didn't help me—not in actual aid—but she gave me through my own the skill of her fingers. I knew so well the moment when she ceased to do so, when she was no longer by my side. I was aware of being again alone. I remember the acrid earth smell, which seemed to fill the car, and the smell of new blood. I was more alone than I had been before Mary had come, because now my only companion was the body of Paradis, leaning in the corner. Only one course was open to me, but there might be a choice in bedfellows—there would be no one to stop the blood from me, no one to arrange me in a corner opposite to Paradis. One fancies our common bier lurching through the mud—my son-in-law and myself finding in death a familiarity we never discovered in life. I preferred my choice. I gave a last care to that which I was leaving, I arranged it by the door, I stayed it so it could not fall until the door was open.

Quietly I slipped away, and presently the glassed portico of a hotel flashed welcome. As I have already related, I got as far as the hotel desk before I found I wasn't ready to die. Death all about me, broken graves and blood, and I myself curiously recrudescent—this blood of which I speak leaping in my own hardening arteries. In the midst of pain I had a brief hour of magnificent youth. It was as if Mary had left me that in lieu of payment for what I had done for her. I walked in the spring shower and my memories were watered to greenness. I lived again years long behind me. I breathed deep of the air which now reaches me filtered by prison windows. I wonder now that I was content to give myself so short a freedom. Youth, in whose grasp everything is held—I should have had more of it—I returned too soon to meet the consequences of my act. There are dreams I have never realized, desires unfulfilled and sights to see.

But I suppose, if I had started forth in quest of these, my hour of youth would have passed—thrown me stranded upon strange shores. There has been wonder enough as it is, adventure enough. Mary went in quest of it first for herself, and now she has brought it to me. If I had started forth as I have said I might have disclosed myself old and far from home, the way cold and dark and dreary. And my garments even more mud-bespattered than they were. . . .

PART THREE

"And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off,

"And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear not, for God is come to prove you. . . ."—Ex. xx. 18-20.

I

THE time of my trial is drawing near. To say that I am glad isn't enough. My whole life has been resolved into a dull pain of waiting, and at the end of it I shall be proved, if not by God, at least by laws which I have hitherto held in respect. I look back and I wonder at myself for having endured so long. I look forward and I wonder how—through my endurance—the days move.

But it is the nights I mind. Night by night what little strength remains to me is sapped away. The dimmed lights in their wire cages serve to make visible the wavering heat. The air is thick with heat, and for all the successive scrubbings, the lime and the carbolic and the washings, there hangs a stench which is like an echo from prisons immemorial. The linen sheets which I have obtained permission to use upon my bed veil too thinly the surface of the mattress beneath. My sleeping garments are my own and their fineness only marks a contrast best unpointed. At night I pray for the coolness of the prison yard and when day comes my prayers are answered with the stone flags which are hot as a burning glass—black, too, with a black as heavy as the particles of soot scattered by a smoking lamp. We pace slowly back and forth, not too many in the care of a guard, and the greater our crime, the greater the liberty allowed us.

My daughters have gone away for the summer, each making a weekly trip on my account, arranging different days in order that I may not be too long alone, and always begging for my assurance that I am just as well off as though they had remained in town. They want to put it very clear they haven't cast me off. When they are alone with me—the screen between—they even forget they think me insane. But in spite of their kindness—in spite of the interest ih many things which I do indubitably take—I still wait. I wait for I know not what, there is a pain which gathers. I would give all my earthly visitors for Mary.

But Mary doesn't come to me now. Those easy, familiar, soul-refreshing communions have ceased. They were more and more infrequent and then our connection—I borrow the term of commerce—grew less clear. More and more dimly I observed her, at last a shadow almost outside the field of sense. Only yesterday, it was, that I thought I could discern something unaccounted by my moral environment. Or was it the day before I waited, breathless and longing, for that which I thought I saw to reveal itself in full measure? But instead of drawing close as it used to do, illumined in a glory which made itself reality, the shadow—if shadow it was—darkened and faded away. It had the effect of turning and going on. And even that short shrift was the clearest vision which has been vouchsafed to me in a period of time. I don't know what it is I've done.

I don't know, even, whether Mary has consciously deserted me, or whether she is now too far from life. She may have reached to heights, may be a part of an outer vastness in which I do not exist. I did not appreciate the extent of my dependence on her. I wonder if I shall find her when I die? It is said the world is small, the universe is considerably larger, and putting material limits altogether aside—well, there might be at least a chance. . . . But it seems I shall have to wait for dying. My lawyers assure me they will prove me insane beyond peradventure. They'll prove me insane, and then they will jockey me about until I am placed under a mild and comparatively agreeable restraint. I might, eventually, be altogether free—the murder of

Jim Paradis a garish interlude in a picturesque career.

I think my family fully expect something of this sort to happen. Their first surprise of horror is worn away, the predicament is serious but hardly irredeemable. Here in my cell there are times when I am inclined to forget my family—I mean my living daughters—even what they expect of me seems not to matter—and then their existence and their rights are borne in on me afresh.

And meanwhile the heat wavers. Meals are brought me—over-boiled vegetables and stale meats in thick, flavourless gravies, butter long from the ice, bread of doubtful quality and eternal pie. We who pay have a choice in pie, but I should hesitate to distinguish. My gustatory memory harks back to far earlier days, when, with my fellow-clerks, I patronized a resort known as the "Merchants' Lunch." But I was young then, there were no prison walls and yards. The "Merchants' Lunch" was in a measure offset by the New England bread and beans with which my mother used to serve the Sunday morning table—beans which she concocted without the customary pork.

That was what my mother really cared about—Sunday morning beans—and the fact that they had to be presented without pork typifies the compromise which I was always tacitly aware she had to make with life. I think to the very end she regarded my father as a foreigner with whom she had in a sense inadvertently become involved. But her regard never interfered with her duty. Mary came rightly by her aptitude for ledgers. My mother helped my father in every detail of his business—the house of Smith is still influenced by traditions of her methods. The mark she left didn't stop at a mere name.

Perhaps now she might have preferred that her name be left out of it. Perhaps Jacobson—even the original Hebrew of it—would have been safer. Have I been glorying in borrowed plumes all these years, plumes which I have only succeeded in bedraggling? Were the New Englanders right about me, after all? I turn back to the first few of these pages and see that I have entirely omitted to mention their disapproval, their distrust—it existed, nevertheless. I remember the days of my courtship and the sense I had that they had gone through with it all before in the case of my father. I remember the cold faces, seared in the sternness of their winters. I could have matched with that my own Siberian fastnesses. . . .

I feel it is the Jew in me that has got me into this; as I say, I begin to share the Yankee doubt. That open door through which my eldest daughter disappeared—perhaps it has been open for me also. My mother's starting point for an American was never very far from Plymouth Rock—Ellis Island was outside her reckoning—perhaps she was right. See what I have done to the name with which she entrusted my father! I am reminded of the favourite trick of a certain auctioneer. He gazes raptly at a particularly good piece.

"Very rarely," he informs his auditors, "do you find a specimen of—such and such a period, or artist, or whatever it happens to be—in an auction-room—"

Very rarely, it is, that you find a Smith in a prison. And here I am. The bidding should be lively.

Even for me, crime is not my province, my ways have lain along the quieter paths of commerce. And now from the prison yard I can see the Bridge of Sighs. I am waiting and ready to cross it. I take my adaptability to be the natural inheritance of the Jew. I have often heard pity expressed for those who, accustomed to softness, are suddenly deprived. But to me, there is another side of this. I suffer, and yet the mere fact that I may note my sufferings in a measure draws their sting. The mind may rise above—I find myself regarding crime from an entirely new angle. In the past my experience of it has been, as I say, so slight—I have served on juries, testified expertly to the value of a rug, but

beyond that I have been a stranger to the courts. I shall be a stranger no longer.

I shall sit there with my jailers and my lawyers, the conspicuous figure of a conspicuous occasion. Paradis himself being out of the running, there will be an emphasis almost bridelike. Everything that is said everybody will look at me, everything that is done everybody will look at me. A jury will be chosen, twelve men who know nothing whatever about the situation in hand, and the legal geniuses to whom I am paying a king's ransom will try to prove me crazy to the satisfaction of the aforesaid jury. I shall be questioned and grilled by men who have made of this form of human endeavour an art and a life work. They will appear to deal with me—I shall be, as I have said, the conspicuous figure—but they will be really dealing more with each other than with me, they will be more worthy of each others' steel. Comparatively helpless, I shall be, but a poor carcass in the midst of a ravening pack, and perhaps this helplessness is as well for the accomplishment of our acknowledged purpose. I hardly espy myself becoming vacant at a lawyer's nudge, perplexed beyond my native capacity for perplexity. My fate, however, has passed out of my own hands.

I am at the mercy of a group of people of whom I had never so much as heard six months ago, who might have never heard of me. These doctors—Dr. Wells and the rest—who are they and what are they? Dr. Wells comes in from the country, from Connecticut, where he spends his summers on his farm, and attempts to interest me with accounts of his chickens and his pigs. Farming is a little outside my line. He tells me it would have been better for me if it hadn't been—I should have lived more in the open, not now of course, but in the past. A sane mind in a sound body—only he quotes the Latin, which I refuse. He seems so altogether friendly, it is hard to remember he's for the State.

What does the State want? It wants to establish a motive for my killing Paradis. It wants to prove what I had against him was definite enough without having to be distorted by insanity. It is known I didn't like him and how his wife—my daughter, Mary—died in my presence. I hear they have found the little doctor who attended her; it was not his wish to be found, but they have him and he has given certain details of her illness. But what does all this prove? It is known Mary's marriage was not a success, Paradis might even be suspected of a hand—accidental enough—in his wife's death. I believe it is vaguely reported he ill-treated her. It is natural to suppose talk had reached my ears. But this, too, is neither here nor there. It all comes down to the fact that on the day of Mary's funeral I shot her husband. Could I have received some information during the time which elapsed between her death and the shooting—some information of a nature to account for my act? Dr. Wells asks me whether I, as a Jew, entertained any feeling against Paradis, as a Christian. I remind the learned doctor that I am only half a Jew, and in reference to Paradis he must use Christian only in its academic sense. Did the reverse hold true, and was my son-in-law similarly prejudiced against me? I have no idea—I should think, however, that what Vie and Lydekoop accepted without comment or complaint should have been good enough for him.

"Then there was no personal enmity?" Dr. Wells asks.

"Always—a great deal—from the very beginning."

"And time confirmed your judgment?"

"Completely so."

"And then your daughter died—you have reason to believe of a certain cause—and on the way back from her funeral her ghost appeared to you and made you kill Paradis. Did you obey blindly, or did you fight against her command?"

I answer this as I can. I obeyed—

I was glad to obey—I fought for her, not against.

"At such a time," I explain, "one acts—one is hardly conscious of a motive."

Wells hastens to say that he, in any official capacity at least, is not concerned with motives. But I am merely telling him:

"I had a sense of urgency—of stress."

"This sense made you act?"

"My daughter made me act."

"You mean your daughter's ghost—"

The distinction between Mary's ghost and Mary is to me so fine. . . . The doctor speaks of an individual responsibility and warns me against placing such responsibility on shoulders which, in the opinion of the law, are unfitted to bear a burden of that sort.

"You wanted to shoot Paradis," he asks, "you wanted to, yourself?"

I bring it to his notice he is not concerned with motives.

"I know—but never mind that! You wanted to shoot him?"

"God, yes! But I should never have done it alone."

And there we are. There, to an extent, we seem to remain. Dr. Wells tries another angle. "What did it appear to be, this ghost? You've described the thing in terms of metaphor. Was it a phenomenon which you saw with your physical eye? Did it tell you to kill Paradis—tell you as I am asking you now? Was it altogether a wraith? You say you would never have done it alone—do you mean you couldn't? Did Mrs. Paradis struggle with her husband, for the first time his match? Did she hold him with material hands? Was she Mrs. Paradis?"

Of course I never think of Mary as being Mrs. Paradis. Can I tell the doctor that she was a thousand times more real to me then than she ever had been before? Can I tell him that my ways of seeing her change—sometimes it is as if it were with my physical eye, sometimes to see her I am all eyes. But that is over now. She won't come to me any more. For the relief of her presence I would give anything I have, I pray for it as I have never prayed in church, there is a hunger in my veins. There are human bonds of which the flesh is not a part. If she were here now to set me at my ease— But she may have reached to heights, as I have said. Dr. Wells thinks that the first shock of her death being over, I myself am in a more normal condition of mind, and therefore not so subject to visitations from another world. I can't get away from the sense that the doctor is not sincere, that he humours me, bears with me, tries for facts he thinks I am refusing to divulge. He doesn't know there are facts I can't give him. I wish I could.

He wants to know whether Farlie, the chauffeur, shared the privilege granted Paradis and me of beholding the supernatural. But Paradis was dying, and the dying see that which is often denied to the living. Besides, Farlie wasn't there when Mary was—I thought I had made that plain. Whether Farlie, if he hadn't been waiting for the sandwiches to be made up—those sandwiches, never eaten—could have seen or heard her, could have been in any way aware of her—why, this is a question for him rather than for me, one even he might be unable to decide by theory.

As I have said, there are facts I can't give. The exact degree to which Mary had contrived to set at nought all earthly barriers, how far she had been able to return over the road she had travelled—how do I know? Not that, any more than I know the exact details of Paradis' treatment of her. Dr. Wells accuses me of a mere temperamental antipathy, the basis for delusions. He forgets, there was Mary herself. Not her ghost now—this time it is I who am guilty of the unfortunate discrimination—but Mary herself, as she was during the years of her marriage, as she became because of them. Mary with her neck bent to a yoke, her feet lagging in the mire.

She had wanted to marry Paradis. Many women have desired worse things. Well—she had her wish. The

granting of wishes is an old source of trouble. I believe there was a fairy who allowed a starving family an unlimited quantity of broth. Their hunger was soon satisfied and then the broth drove them from their house, ran in rivers down the street, flooded the town, caused the king in his palace to wonder. To offset the nondescript fable, I turn to the words I read most and find the parable of the prodigal son. He gathered his portion of goods together and journeyed into a far country. He wasted his substance in riotous living. And then there was famine. Humbly he returned to his father. But his father refused to accept humbleness and killed for him the fatted calf. "For this, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." If Mary had come back to me in this life, I should have treated with her in terms of life. But coming to me as she did with the grave clothes about her, the least I could do for her was what she asked. I am aware that Paradis was no fatted calf.

II

MARY has deserted me when I need her most. I have said, one cannot expect of the spirit the consistence to be demanded of the flesh. I would add to that now—the dead may leave debts, but cannot pay them. It seems as though Mary had come very far to incur an obligation. She returned to me out of the void, out of space or whatever it is, and she shouldn't have come if she hadn't intended to see it through. With her at my side I could have faced everything — Mary to give me the strength of heart to win — Mary, as proof of my incompetence. I feel she owes my lawyers an apology.

With her aid they managed to build a structure of defence which now—without her—bids fair to totter. She hasn't been fair to any of us, slipping off the way she has, taking advantage of her new-found power to be lost among the stars. We are but poor mortals pinned to earth by gravity and the vital principle. Perhaps, to her, the obligations of this world seem unimportant, she may have begun to forget our little human preferences, and yet I think of her as forgetting nothing—as being in the midst of a vast simplification of understanding and of knowledge.

I have said that Mary was hard—hard and young. She went through fire and death and she was still hard and young. Mary, as she used to come to me in my cell, was sometimes a figure of mist, a figure you could see straight beyond as you could beyond rain, and yet she had even then the hardness of flint — and youth — my heart! — a youth as much more enduring than the delicate green of spring as the sparkle of the diamond endures beyond the shimmer of sunlight in a pool. She could have met this modern world of youth on its own grounds, fought it and won. For it is her battle as well as mine, though I—alone—will lose it. If Mary were here with me now she might permit me to drink a little of the precious fluid. She has done so before. She gave me an hour of youth as a reward, she left it for me as a sort of payment, as an intrenchment of a strength against the trouble the killing of Paradis would bring. I drank deep of youth then, the draught refreshing, and I might be allowed to do so again if Mary were here. She and I together—we could face the devil then—face him as we have before.

We could face the judge and jury, the very learned counsellors. Hers would have been the sort of figure against which the cleverest prosecuting attorney would have been at a loss. She would have had the value of the unknown, the surprising, the dramatic. Mary, the ghost of her, visible at least to me, and the effect of her visibility plain on my face for all to see it—I should be willing to lay that confounding presence against any forces of reason or of law. Isaac Smith, a crazy old man, with his delusion by his side —that would convince. For anyone can *tell* about a ghost. . . . It would put at rest, too, this doubt I find exists,

of whether I believe in it myself in all good faith. But if I do not, after all I've said, my life as a merchant has been misspent, my vocation should have been of a kind to have encompassed my powers of invention even more fully.

In spite of her desertion of me, I have grown to an intense admiration for my daughter—this in spite also of the failure she must be counted as having made of her life. I feel her failure was largely due to the accident of Paradis. He was the Achilles heel provided by the fates. But perhaps she was that for him—and, womanlike, she had the last word. Mary has had her revenge, which may be all she cares for now. She accomplished in death what she never could in life. I only ask her one thing more, to save me from the result of her accomplishment.

All about me are those who have not been saved. It isn't a surface mark which prison puts on men. Many of those who are here are men like myself, who have led lives decent enough, finally transgressing the law for reasons which seemed to them sufficient. And even where transgression has become a habit there is a disconcerting uniformity with citizens of the outside world. I should never again trust my head bookkeeper, his twin is here, a noted forger, and the peering, bespectacled little man with the thinning hair is accused of having poisoned a former sweetheart on the eve of her marriage to another.

I find myself on the verge of danger—there is such a thing as growing to have a mind too open. And yet, out in the yard there, morning and evening, with the elevated trains roaring near and the great buildings and the dust, matters are discussed which I—a Jew, a man of business who has spent sixty years in a great city—do not understand. I find my astuteness handicapped by my innocence. And I value my innocence—comparative, in my case, as the term may be. It would be a short path to my grave, lighted by an ever-widening knowledge of evil greater than the evil which I admit myself as having been, at the beginning, too weak to resist.

There must be a pleasure in sin for its own sake alone. Cruelty can be repaid by cruelty—deceptions deeply planned—and the face of heaven farther and farther from sight. Words are passed along, words like worms across the road. I do not fully understand, and yet I seem to get a vision, the physical reacts upon the mental, and so to the moral. Take my own case. But we've been taking that from the first. No coast known to Pilgrim Fathers could have been more stern and rockbound than the shore against which the ship of my adventures has been cast. If I were facing death I shouldn't be nearly so depressed. But there seems to be a sort of conspiracy under foot to keep me alive for my sufferings; this would be a compromise everyone would be glad to make—even the State, who is my prosecutor if I have the legal term, and wants to prove that mine is the sole responsibility for the killing of Paradis and that I did it when in the full possession of my faculties. Life is one thing, but freedom quite another—still more the freedom of the private asylum, which pleases as a prospect, but is none the less in doubt, since the ghost of my daughter has refused to bear with me.

I pray that out of her power Mary will condescend. Out of her mercy she must come, a shield for me and a splendour. She must forgive me my blunders and my abode. If I had Paradis to kill again I should do it better. Practice perfects. I should be able to cut his smile in half, smear with red the white teeth, make the fine arched foot to stumble in its tread. And the brain of him, where the vain, easy thought flowed so free—for once his ideas wouldn't matter. It was never in accordance with his ideas that his wife should have sources of knowledge other than himself—she has them now.

I remember when I was one of three men in the room with death—Paradis and the doctor whom Paradis had called

in and myself. And Mary lay before us, the shell worn through, the soul still folded chrysalis-wise. Three men, we were, and none of us obeyed our instincts. The doctor should have escaped. Paradis tried to do the same, and I—risen to a clear white heat—have accused him before the world. We might have killed him afterwards, but we should have broken him first. There are men like that here in the jail, he would have been a god among them. Lithe and strong, lying and easy, with a quick surface comprehension—oh, he would have understood their language!—and yet, for all the use he'd be, like a bundle of rotting faggots dropped by a tramp. I myself may be but little better, with my good name gone and the mortification of my flesh begun. I dream at night of smooth waters, safe harbours, the cooling salt winds coming in from the sea, and I wake to the rising heat. I see the bars of my cell door, and the wire cage around the light which casts barred shadows on the floor.

III

THE summer has dragged its weariness along until it has become a season of the past, and as such with little to distinguish it from other seasons, superficially more agreeable. I had once thought to strike off the days from my calendar but refrained from a superstitious dread of more days to fill their place. Now I can cross the months instead—July and August—and September tentatively marked. September is king among months. I was born in September, and now the time is come when I might better never have been so. My trial is at hand, it is a matter of hours, not days, and even as I write the hours elapse.

You must figure me no longer as an old man sitting in a prison cell waiting the judgment of the young men about me. My judgment is arrived, and I am snatching from its very midst a moment here, a moment there, to chronicle its passing.

I am writing now with no philosophy, there is no perspective to give a just angle to events. As I write the hours lapse, and I am aware my book is not complete. Whatever happens to me, I should like to be able to get some account of it down in black and white—it would give me a final sense of superiority over circumstances which have been in themselves harsh enough. But I don't want prying—interference. The longer I remain within these walls the more do I withdraw my confidence from my fellow beings. Wolfe and Davis are loyal, with the highly paid loyalty of their kind, but who else? Mary has deserted me, and what do Dawn and Lily care, and all the Lydekoops and all the Vies, except to get my unpleasant affairs settled, one way or the other, as quickly as possible? As for Dr. Wells, his usefulness to the State is ended, as far as I am concerned, because I refuse to talk with him any more.

The bars of my cell door are blurred by the shadow of the hangman waiting outside them. I have thought I should rather die than live, that death would be a blessed release from the misfortunes which wear me. I was wrong. I choose life at any price, I am no more ready to die now than I was on that far-famed afternoon when I turned away from the strange hotel which I had so purposefully approached. It is difficult for me to realize that at best death is only at the bend of the road. Life is a mountain peak, and the old have nearly climbed it. But—ah—the view to be attained!

All along I have been assured I ran my chance between a verdict based upon insanity and one they call murder in the second degree—comparative freedom and what would be for me life imprisonment. Perhaps that is true, but I keep telling myself whatever they do with me it can't matter so very much. I bring the reason of age to bear against my instinct, and yet I cling to earth as desperately as though I were sixteen instead of sixty. I accept my fate with as bad a grace as though I

were one of the boys in the cell block below me. In fact I am not nearly so resigned as they are. They sit there so meek on their little wooden seats. They have the distinction of being the only prisoners who see and are seen by the casual sightseer to the jail; men might resent the indignity of being merely stared at, while the boys would regard it as a diversion to lighten the monotony. I wonder, were I in their place, if I should regard anything as a diversion? I think if I were really sixteen I should pull this whole rotting pile of stones down about my ears.

These last hours are the worst. If I were permitted a special lamp I should be writing through the night, as it is I scribble uncertainly until the strain upon my sight becomes too great. It is too dim for work, too bright for sleep, thought, only, is allowed me—thought and the maunderings of my companions. Up and down the corridor I can hear the murmurings and the tossings—there is a man who curses and in turn is softly cursed by the recurrent guard. But anything is better than the periods of silence, when the prison breathes and sighs and breathes again. I wonder how many more nights I shall have here? The days will be filled with the pitiless glare of the courtroom. And then at last I suppose there will be some sort of ending.

I have a sense this will come just in time—that my endurance will have reached its limits. I am merely an individual who has brought himself into contact with the forces of the law, and it would be too much to expect of the law that its ways should be disturbed—even in the face of my individual disaster. I have said I snatch from the midst of judgment a moment here, a moment there. Figure me so, and writing as I can—thinking all in a mass. Now, as I write, the morning has come. I shall dress with more than usual care—I shall eat. . . .

Activity buzzes. Wolfe and Davis have had their final private say. Dawn and Lily visited me briefly at what must have been for them a most inconvenient hour. The press is anxious. Everyone is gathered together and waiting—everyone, from Paradis' brother to the labourers who helped dig Mary's grave—the butler, the chauffeur, the boy who took the order for the sandwiches, the maid whom I found weeping in the Paradis kitchen on the day of Mary's death. They all are here, primed to come forward with their facts. I myself may have missed the truth, but I can see it will be supplied me. The truth and the law and the judgment of my peers. Who are my peers? Whoever they are, I am delivered into their hands. God rest Mary's soul in heaven!

IV

Paradis' death has been proved, and the fact that I killed him beyond all reasonable doubt—the fact of Mary's death and my presence at it. The general character of Paradis has been discussed, and many incidents of his brief, inglorious career brought forth for the delectation of the court. Even the earliest of his escapades had been rather more unpleasant than the usual thing. They're not as afraid of him as I thought they would be. My own life has been subjected to a fruitless search—fruitless or fruitful, as you please to regard it—my character compared with his and the hostility between us marked. The jury sit within their railing like wise birds at roost. Why shouldn't they be wise? They were chosen with infinite pains, fought over and accepted, one by one. Dawn and Lily are resigned and exquisite—they bear their cross incomparably—their husbands are not so resigned and grudge the time and the publicity. A murder trial is no place for women. And the men at the reporters' table listen and write and sketch. While they may, they take advantage of the anomalous presence of beauty.

And who but Dr. Wells sits by the prosecuting attorney and suggests questions with which to confound the med-

ical experts for the defence? He is driving scaffold nails, I think, and with a gusto. There he is, big and tawny. He used to lead me on to talk of the store. He now makes capital out of my mercantile acuteness. What can my poor experts do against his easy whispering?

My lawyers are clever with their technicalities and have introduced this book here, and the ghost, and my curious lack of anything to approach remorse. But it's a lack not at all unusual, I find. We are enveloped in black doubt, our case is weaker than we had foreseen. Anyone can *tell* about a ghost, as I have said—I myself have thought of all their arguments. But I lacked the prosecutor's gift for sarcasm:

"We all see ghosts—the stalking spectres of our pasts, the premonitions of our futures—and white mice and snakes with two tails, and shadows of beautiful women on our wall at night—"

The power on high accuses him of a levity unsuitable to courts. He meant no disrespect:

"But Mr. Smith's ghost is of a different breed—marked among ghosts—he translates into terms of ghostship that most perfect of all human relations, parent and child. And the ghost took over his human will. The ghostly fingers, too frail to shoot, were able to lend the skill they couldn't use direct. Ah—the accused is a man of many talents—I'm afraid he doesn't appreciate himself, either as a marksman or a raconteur—an actor, too—but one well understands the position of the Defence. The Defence would snatch at this ghost as a drowning man might snatch—"

It has been my privilege to hear the fabric of my mind ravelled into a thousand threads. Back and forth it goes, from Paradis to Mrs. Jones. You remember Mrs. Jones, whom I prevented from purchasing the Ming carving? My clerk has done his best for me in merely having the chance to state his honest opinion of my course. Many matters which I thought would be dealt with at length haven't been mentioned, and the reverse is true. It's like a game, a great complicated game, and I find myself the veriest tyro—I, who thought I should play the leading hand. I'm the ball, the goal, my name somehow figures in the score. A vast deal of feeling is engendered, an emotion which stirs the courtroom like the waves of the sea, but the game's the thing, the emotion is of the nerves rather than the heart. And through it, the cloud of doubt looms—blacker it grows than the black draperies of my daughters, heavier than the judge's frown. With that easy emotion—of the nerves rather than of the heart—Wolfe and Davis are near to desperation. Something is wrong. They're trying to prove me crazy and they can't do it. And as for the State's precious motive—well, I killed Paradis because I wanted to—what better reason?

Have you ever watched from the balcony the floor of the Stock Exchange during a flurry of trading? The roar of voices, the upraised hands, the fluttering white paper—and then the lull—crescendo—diminuendo. Picture the Stock Exchange adjusted to a scale of dignity. The judge listens, the jury roosts, the handful of people who really care one single continental sit with tense hands and hard faces. A voice speaks, drowning in its volume the voices of those who would like to be heard. Where are my defenders? I am disappointed in the quality of Davis, he is failing me and my need is very great. What have I done but do as Mary said? There is a humming in my ears, my vision is blurred and all my senses.

Through my faintness I am aware of Wolfe plucking at my sleeve. A recess has been called. This is the middle of the third day—if we had those days to live again! I am asked how I feel. I wonder if I look half as badly. But bad as that is—in spite of it or because of it—they want to put me on the stand. I am to take it in my own behalf.

I started to count the number of

steps between the table at which I had been sitting with my counsel and the witness box to which I had been called. I couldn't tell you now how many—I walked straight, I know. I put up my hand to take the oath, but a mistake had been made, someone was there before me. They already occupied the curious high-backed seat upon which I was about to sit down. I raised my glance from the grey of the skirt that rather closely outlined the bent knees—it was a woman who had my place—raised it finally from knee to head. It was a slow upward scrutinizing look I gave—neither fleeting nor sidewise—and then I must have stiffened and thrown out my arms instinctively for balance. My arms went right through the figure of Mary, and my hands clutched the back of the seat against which she appeared to be easing her fatigue. My wrists, cutting the zone of her presence, were fanned in a cooling wind.

"Mary—"

I felt the strength running into my veins—running like water into a tube. I was commanded to sit down. Among all those present, Mary had revealed herself to me alone.

I had to lend the court my vision of her. I had to bring her out—the grey flexed figure, the luminous eyes, the head so wearily yet so nobly set. I could feel the glory of her upon me like a mantle. I had been commanded to sit down, but I was permitted to stand; I couldn't have sat with the cold wind to wrap me. I remember the District Attorney's smile—it was all in the game, and he seemed to be conceding a point to an imaginary umpire. "Very clever—very clever indeed!"

"Clever be damned!" shouted Davis, and leapt to his feet.

"Silence—" roared the judge. It made you think of a scene in "Alice in Wonderland."

It was like that, queer and comic, and yet it was as I had hoped in my wildest hopes and prayed in my prayers and presumed to dream. Only it went beyond any mere anticipation of mine. I remember the prosecutor—"There's nothing there, and you know there's nothing!"

But as he looked at me his denial seemed to shrivel on his tongue.

I rejoiced in Mary's presence, I made the most of the eloquence she allowed me. I was torn between my desire to have her to myself and my desire to use this new power she had brought. My heart bled for her weariness and the trouble she had endured to reach me—she didn't have to speak, to tell me—at the same time the blood was pounding in my heart with triumph.

There was a movement among my counsel. They were coming to a decision among themselves. It was plain, almost before they had fully decided to recall me, that they thought I had said enough. . . .

I was being excused. I turned, questioning, and, as I did so, Mary rose. She inclined her head ever so slightly, as if in thanks—thanks to the judge, the jury, the lawyers, the whole court—and there was an intimate smile for her sisters, who never saw her at all. I had not believed in haloes, but Mary's transcendence was a halo about her. Her eyes held flame that even her own had never vied with, her grace was the complete grace of moonlight and pine forests and church spires at dusk—and yet she was a woman—and more than mortal. For a moment I felt the brushing of her hand across my cheek, and the cooling wind in a breath. And then she disappeared as though a curtain patterned with the normal furnishings of the courtroom were drawn across the space which she had occupied.

Here my defence rests.

HELEN TAILLORE

By Thyra Samter Winslow

HELEN TAILLORE, playing a bit of an old French song on the rather tinkly piano—it wasn't much out of tune if you didn't strike the extreme treble or the extreme bass notes—turned abruptly before she had finished.

She spoke as we often speak to the one we talk with most frequently, without a real beginning, as if the conversation were part of something that had gone before.

"Things could go on for years—like this. And in the end we'd collapse, like a brick of ice-cream, or keep on, poor and pretending."

"But, dear," answered her mother, closing her fingers over the book she was reading, "I don't think you realize, sometimes, what a good time you are having, how fortunate you are. You're only twenty-three, you know. And now Penfield has this splendid opportunity. You've had a wonderful winter and you're going to the Rogers' house-party and then to the Jamisons' and undoubtedly Ruth will ask you up after that. You've enough clothes for those things, I'm sure. With a new coat and a few more blouses . . . I don't like to see you so discontented."

"You're a dear. Of course I'm a beast to snarl so, only I'm so tired of it—waiting for invitations and acting so nice about things. I'm always taking the odd hand at bridge when I'd rather dance and dancing when I'd rather read and reading when no one asks me to do things. 'Little Tommy Tucker sings for his supper'—that's me. I'm asked because I'm entertaining and interesting and 'fill in' nicely or because a Taillore, even the poorest one, adds distinction to the party. Sometimes I want to shriek at things.

"Penfield—he's a wonder. I couldn't have imagined a better brother. But the child's only twenty-five and you know he's so full of plans for houses he can't think of anything else. In ten years, now that he has a chance with the Grants, he'll begin getting a real salary. Then he'll marry, of course. And we . . ."

She slipped off the piano bench, and, taking a cushion, sat on it, cross-legged, in front of her mother.

"Did it ever occur to you, Mother, what geese we were? All we have—that little cheque for rent, and how we make it stretch and pretend it's three times as big. Here, this apartment, five rooms and always pretending there's more. A view out of the windows so ugly we have to use double curtains and pretend not to notice. One maid—and you and I doing most of the work so we can have Jennie, who wears caps and aprons and serves nicely, instead of a strong, husky girl who could really clean and cook, but who wouldn't look presentable. The other day, waiting for Penfield in the Grants' office, I talked with a Mrs. Fisher, whose husband is there, too. I'd met her before, a nice little thing. She pays half as much for her apartment as we do and it's brand-new and white and shining. She pays a maid seven dollars and the maid does the washing and ironing and all the work and the cooking, too. Mrs. Fisher serves when they have company and she says her husband doesn't mind the subway ride. They have lots of light and air. I actually have to walk over to the

park to find out by the foliage what season it is."

"Where is this wonderful apartment?"

"That's the catch, of course. It's out on 170th Street. Awful people. Socially impossible. Imagine anyone coming out there. I asked her how much the taxi fare was, and she said—"

"Yes?"

"She didn't know—they'd only been there eight months and hadn't needed a taxi. But the bus went only two blocks from her house!"

"You'd like to move there, I suppose!"

"I don't know. It would be fun to slip from under and be happy on nothing at all in a little new neighbourhood. But of course we won't. We aren't that kind. We like being a part of things. I feel that, too, already, being a Taillore. So we keep on—this way. Something's got to be done about it."

Mrs. Taillore smiled.

"When you marry—" she said.

"Oh, marriage! You haven't noticed whole lines of suitors forming at the door, have you?"

"But, seriously, Helen, there have been—unusual opportunities."

"Real men? I hadn't seen them. If a millionaire were willing to exchange a few of his millions for a wife who spelled Taillore with two 'l's' and an 'e' or, if there were really someone who—oh, there isn't anyone. So, I'm planning something else. Quite in cold blood. A career!"

"What sort?"

"Oh, a real one. I'm going on the stage!"

"You're joking!"

"Not at all. Of course a Taillore never did."

"Indeed not. Nor a Throckden nor a Penfield."

"That's just it. How valuable that makes me. And I'm young and quite, quite beautiful, besides—and modest. But, really, it's quite possible.

"Nothing else is. I enjoy seeing efficient business women with white linen shirts and cold, superior manners, but I could never do things like that—getting up early and spending long days in an office. But the stage. As Penfield would say, it intrigues me."

Her mother smiled. Another of Helen's schemes. She'd not do it, of course. Taillores didn't go on the stage.

II

Helen seemed to forget the ridiculous plan. Time passed pleasantly with a succession of little pleasures. The Frederick Stuarts took a fancy to her that summer and included her on some delightful short cruises and house parties and a motor trip or two. Fall came and there were parties and the theatre and then the opera. It seemed so easy to drift along, indefinitely, buying ready-made frocks at inexpensive upstairs shops and pretending a bit over their origin, doing no entertaining except an occasional guest at dinner, accepting invitations from relatives and from acquaintances who didn't mind spending money. There were gloomy days, of course, when the pretence wore thin, when Helen wanted something real to happen. But there were happy days, too.

Most of the happy days were when Helen saw Douglas Towne. She didn't admit it. Douglas Towne was no more to her than any other man she had always known, of course. He was attractive, she'd admit that. But, so were a lot of other people. Even his soft, rather crumpled black hair—the sort that always seems to need definite feminine smoothings, his smoke-coloured eyes, his olive skin were no more wonderful than the qualities other men possessed. Even his crisp, rather impatient voice, his questioning smile, were nothing, of course. Still, after she had seen him, the day did seem more pleasant, as if something quite wonderful had happened. Little sentences he said would come back to her, weeks later. Almost unconsciously his pet words, phrases, wove themselves into Helen's vocabulary.

Of course she didn't care. Taillores

do not let themselves care for people who are definitely out of reach. Douglas Towne was. There was no question about that. He was a bit of a snob, though that included Helen and so was really a virtue. Other attributes weren't. His opinion about marriage, for one thing. He was so definitely the kind of man who doesn't marry. Not that he didn't like women. He did. But he liked to choose one, carefully, to fit into a particular evening's pleasure or a peculiar mood.

Douglas had just enough money to do the things he cared about. Married, he'd drop into middle-class oblivion. Single, he was alluring, even dangerous. No, one couldn't marry Douglas Towne. So, why worry about him? Helen was quite sure she didn't. Only the days they had spent together on the *Montroon*, a certain early ride, tea in queer little shops, a day's motor trip to an old farmhouse—those were pleasant bits to remember.

When Helen met Arthur McConnor she felt that she definitely shoved Douglas Towne into the past and firmly closed the door. Arthur McConnor was "a chance." Matrimony was written all over his smoothly shaved pink face, his sleekly brushed hair, his broad shoulders. He was a prize for the first feminine picker who had a few necessary possessions. Helen had them all.

Arthur McConnor was born in the Middle West. There he had added to the fortune his father had started and had been East about four years. Therefore, gaining a definite social standing was quite important to him. Helen had quite enough social standing. She was pretty enough, too, in a sleek, crisp way. She had the gentleness and reserve that McConnor had never met until he came East. It drew him because he didn't understand it very well. In Huntington, Nebraska, girls were good fellows and didn't seem always to be questioning you under raised brows or looking through you if you happened to do the wrong thing.

McConnor didn't often feel that he did the wrong thing, for that matter. He was quite sure that money was the thing that counted, after all. He had a lot of it. In a restaurant, now, tip the waiter enough, and you own the place, nothing too good for you.

Money was the thing, these days. McConnor always found it so. You can buy anything. When he met Helen Taillore she seemed to fit quite evenly into his pattern of things. Her little indifferent, superior manner could quite carry off anything. In his box at the opera, say, Helen, as Mrs. McConnor. It was very satisfactory.

Helen understood Arthur McConnor as soon as she saw him. She recognized his boorishness, his heavy lack of knowing little things. But he was good-natured in rather a clumsy way and she had got used to climbers—one has to accept favours, you know. And he did have money. And these days, money . . .

Why not marry Arthur McConnor and have it over with? A house in the East Seventies, perhaps, and a really good car or two and no bills to bother about.

If it hadn't been for a talk Helen heard at a Friday morning lecture . . .

III

It was an ordinary talk enough at one of those series of things someone is always being handed tickets to by someone else who had to buy them—quartettes in unusual chamber music, folk songs by rather frightened foreign amateurs, a lecture or two.

This lecture was the usual sort on feminism. But it brought back to Helen the thought of a "career." After all, the lecturer was right, even if he were a too-pale young man who let his hair grow long over his collar: to accept matrimony simply as a means of being supported is the worst form of social slavery—to every woman is offered the means of escape—every woman has the capabilities of a career.

So—thoughts of the stage came back to Helen. She hadn't been trained for

anything. She hated to think of selling or nursing or teaching. Taillores didn't do things like that. Besides, there was no money for expensive training and she wanted to get into something—start the career with a great bang. The stage—that was something real. Didn't unknown girls go into it each year and succeed and get their pictures in the magazines? It would be jolly getting notes and presents—of course you'd send the presents back, but it would be fun to get them—and applause.

Helen didn't know much about the stage from the side behind the curtain. She'd been going to properly selected theatres since she was ten—a Christmas pantomime the winter she spent with Aunt Martha Penfield in London—and Saturday matinees at home, Maude Adams and musical things. And, of course, the last few years she'd seen a lot.

But only twice had Helen been behind the scenes. The first time, at eighteen, she had been in an amateur entertainment. Usually, her mother didn't approve, but this was for her own pet charity, and Helen, in the chorus, did some rather weird dances, costumed by an amateur designer who yearned for an opportunity to express himself. She had had a little dance by herself, too, just a few steps. There had been a lot of applause.

The other time she had been "behind" was a year later. Estelle Durant had had a cousin playing in "On Time" and, after the first act, Estelle took six of the girls back to the cousin's dressing-room. The odd smells, the hurrying through dark passages, the little dressing-room, the cousin, with her painted face, had all fascinated Helen.

Helen, like most other girls, thought life on the stage was something different, alluring, as if a conjurer waved his wand. Didn't men always fall in love with actresses? Even Douglas Towne—if she went on the stage—was a star . . . Perhaps she'd let him bring flowers to her dressing-room the night after she had been made a star. He'd come in, quite overcome, but she'd show him success hadn't changed her and she'd rise and hold out her hand, he'd come toward her . . .

So Helen decided. She put on her smartest black suit, her smallest, most discreet hat and started out one Monday in November.

She knew very little about what to do. Her reading had told her that booking agents were the people to attack, so she had a whole list of them, copied from the Classified Section of the telephone book, in her small mesh bag.

The first few calls were disappointing. The men in attendance were quite polite—but the places themselves! Dirty paper and cigarettes on the uncarpeted floors, overdressed, rough-looking people sitting around the dingy offices. The windows were dirty, everything was horrible.

Helen was quite discouraged after a morning of it. So she ran into Frankie Everett's office and he took her to luncheon. Over the ices she told him about it. She had known him always. Frankie didn't seem as enthusiastic as he might have been. Of course, after she was a star, he'd change his attitude . . .

Frankie gave her the names of two agencies he had heard of and told her to see the producers who usually had shows playing in New York. Helen tucked the names into the mesh bag and started again the next day.

Frankie's names weren't much better than her own had been. In three weeks she had had seven offers—from the chorus of a third road show playing a four-year-old musical comedy to a chance to do "bits" in a company going to Australia for a two years' engagement. Of course she couldn't consider things like that.

She hated the cheap, dirty booking-offices. She drew her shoulders together as she went in for fear some of the motley crowd would touch her. She hated to be touched by strangers. Of course, she wouldn't need these offices after she found something.

After a month or so, she had an op-

portunity to get into the chorus of a New York show—she couldn't think of leaving town.

At first she hesitated. But, after all, a lot of stars started that way, Elsie Ferguson—a great many more. After the first week or two, they'd single her out and give her a part, like the solo dance she'd had at the charity entertainment. Then, one night the star would be ill and she'd be put in her place . . .

IV

SHE was quite a bit excited when she went to the theatre for a try-out. She tried a door at the front of the theatre and found it locked. A man lounging there, his hat rather far back on his head, slouched up to her.

"Who are you looking for?"

Ordinarily Helen would have turned away indignant at being addressed, disrespectfully and informally, by a not-at-all-prepossessing stranger. Perhaps, though, he belonged to that mysterious other world.

"I was told to report here for the rehearsal of a new play," she explained.

"Oh, sure, Hall's new show. Front of the house is closed. You'd better go round. Ask for Cooper."

Helen thanked him. In some way she knew that "go round" meant the stage entrance. She turned to look for it and was surprised to see the slouchy giver of information open a door, right next to the one she had tried, and disappear into the theatre.

She found the door marked "Stage Entrance." As usual with all theatres, no matter how cleverly decorated the foyer may be, the stage door is always a bit dirty and disreputable. She opened the heavy iron door. She was in a narrow, brick-lined passageway. She walked up some stairs and found the stage, much as she had pictured it. There was just enough natural light to make the sets look too brightly coloured Everything looked dirty, too.

About fifty girls stood on the stage, most of them in little groups. There was a slight sprinkling of men, young looking mostly, with sly, thin faces. Surely these weren't chorus men. Helen, seeing chorus men from the front, clad in evening clothes of bright-coloured satin or in the very last word, with a few extra sentences, in day attire, always wearing hats, no matter what the occasion, had sometimes thought chorus men were bright, young, college-looking youths. These incorrectly dressed, unhealthy-looking men annoyed her.

The girls, too, were a bit cheaper than she had imagined them. She had read about chorus girls, their big salaries, their charm, their luxuries gained by "the great sacrifice." She had always wanted to meet a few. Now here were dozens. They looked disappointingly like girls who sold things in shops, only cheaper and more tawdry.

Helen could not sit down on any of the dust-covered chairs. She stood so as not to touch anything, watching the girls that came in. How coarse their voices were!

An hour passed and two men arrived. They were both rather fat and looked like middle-class business men. She thought they had rather heavy faces.

The men sat down on chairs they drew towards a small table. A couple of girls came up to them and, leaning over, spoke with animation and many smiles. The men nodded indifferently. The girls moved away.

Three more men came, then, from the front of the house, the sloppy man Helen had spoken to, a young man with a pale face and rather a spruce fellow in a checked suit.

A shirt-sleeved man wheeled a piano near the front of the stage. The pale man took off his coat, one of the fat men took out a paper and pencil and started chewing on the pencil.

One of the men called something. The others knew what he said, evidently, for they strolled up and formed a sort of line. Helen joined them. She felt ridiculously out of place. It amused her to watch the girls with their exaggerated airs of indifference, their assumed elegance of manner.

Some of them were frankly plain and poorly dressed. The majority were pretty in an ordinary, showy way. They lacked some of the nicer details of appearance that Helen had taken for granted they would have, but many of them wore expensive clothes cut on extreme lines.

The men looked at the line solemnly, nodding to girls they knew, saying things to one another about them.

The pale young man went to the piano. The first girl in line went over to him. He played a few chords, the girl sang a scale. The pale man called "three." The girl went to the table and the fat man spoke to her, nodded, wrote something on paper.

One at a time the girls sang. Helen was glad she was near the end of the line. Most of the girls sang only fairly well. Occasionally one, usually quite plain, would surprise everyone by the strength and even sometimes by the beauty of her voice.

Helen knew her own voice was not especially good. She had had a year of rather indifferent training—the lessons had been the gift of a cousin who happened to be interested in a young singing teacher. By the time her turn came she had got over part of her nervousness, though she was afraid she sang rather badly. How some of the other girls had shrieked!

The pale man called "two." The fat man asked her name. He spelled it incorrectly.

"Experience?" he asked.

She said "Just amateur things." He grunted something to the man in a checked suit, who grunted an answer in return. Helen felt quite as if she were being offered for sale. She could feel the colour mount her face. She wanted to leave, indignantly. But, even more, she wanted a career on the stage.

She was back in line again. The voices had all been tried. The men looked over the girls again, as if they were trying to determine their weight to an ounce, weighing black hair against blonde. How often she had admired the dainty, graceful girls on this very stage! She had been glad her card had been for this theatre, for she had heard so much of the refinement of the organization.

The fat man called out names, then, . . . Voight, Baker, Ellingwood, Trudell, perhaps forty more. Toward the last—Tailor. Then, "The rest may go."

The dismissed girls left with fairly careless flirts of their skirts. The rest looked more superior than ever. The other fat man, who proved to be Cooper—a girl who has "worked under Cooper" is quite important in the chorus world—had the girls go through some preliminary work, simple steps. He dismissed a dozen more and called a rehearsal for the next day.

V

HELEN was there the next morning at ten. A little round girl with staring eyes spoke to her.

"They certainly get wild mobs here the first days, don't they?" she said.

Helen agreed that they did.

"Wait till Hall and Cooper get weeding them out. All these amateurs and one-nighters will disappear soon enough."

Helen agreed again and the girl went on to tell her about her last show, and the lines she had had. Helen listened, fascinated at the mixture of incorrect English, stage idioms and an attempted "air."

During the morning, about fifty more girls and men came in for tryouts. A few were kept, a girl who knew the musical director, another, flashily dressed, with a note to the fat man, who read it, solemnly shook hands with her and motioned her to a chair, which she accepted with heavy nonchalance, a man whom they all nodded to and who evidently didn't need a voice trial.

Each day Helen reported for rehearsals. They learned the lyrics first, sitting on chairs around the piano. Helen saw the crowd change, gradually. Friends of someone in authority or girls with unusual beauty or voices

were added, others were dismissed with a curt word. She stayed on. She learned that the fat man was Hall, who "owned the show," learned the names of the other men.

Cooper said, "Practice clothes to-morrow," and was ready to "put on the numbers." Helen couldn't ask what he meant, so came as usual in a tailored suit. She found the girls dressed in a mixture of gymnasium and bathing costumes, tights, odd costumes of vaudeville acts that had failed, shows that had closed "on the road."

"What's the matter, no practice clothes?" Cooper asked her.

"I didn't hear you," she said. "I'll wear them to-morrow."

That day, other girls were let out. Helen knew that the shapes of their legs had something to do with it—she had seen the group of men discussing them. She couldn't blame the men, of course. She knew that the show had to look well from the front—only it did seem rather a crude thing to do.

The next day she wore practice clothes, a discreet bathing suit she had worn all last summer. She felt much less pleasant in it than she had on the beach, as if she were doing something unattractively immoral. She watched the entrance in fear that someone she knew might recognize her—Helen Taillore—in a bathing suit—rehearsing in a chorus. Of course, she could always pretend it was some sort of a joke—and—later—when she got out of the chorus—into stardom . . .

The conversation of the other girls first amazed and interested, later annoyed, then disgusted her. She began to understand the innuendoes, the unpleasant things that constantly clung to their slightest remarks. She couldn't believe at first that she understood what they said. Insults were given and accepted as pleasantries. Indecencies masked as wit. The uncouth language, the attitude toward pleasant things, toward life, made her feel as if she were slumming. She didn't like it. Still—if she wanted to get ahead. . . .

She worked hard learning the dance steps. She liked them and because she was quick and slender and strong she learned them rapidly.

The girls asked her questions, taunted her with being an amateur and hinted at her morals. She said as little as she could and, as there were others who proved better targets, she was gradually left alone. She heard dreadful things about "being insulted by the owner of the show" and that sort of thing. But the men absolutely ignored her.

Then, quite suddenly, Helen and five other girls were dismissed. Another show, under the same management, had closed, and girls from that company were out of employment and had to be looked out for, either because they were well known or had influential friends.

Nearly a month of rehearsals had gone for nothing, but Helen was really rather relieved to be out of it. When she got home, after being dismissed, her bath seemed to remove all the slime that the chorus had fastened upon her. She wouldn't try a chorus position again, that was certain. Still, she had learned a lot of things about the stage. She ought to be able to get something really good now. Of course, the people in a good dramatic production would be different from the girls in the chorus.

VI

Her mother hoped that this experience would end Helen's desire for a stage career. She had viewed the rehearsals first with dismay, then with resignation. Helen had told her very little about them.

Helen knew that she would keep on. After all—even rehearsals, smudged as they were, were more exciting than evenings with Arthur McConnor. They kept her from thinking, too, thinking that she must decide . . . anything.

She started hunting a position again. She shrank even more from the unpleasant booking offices. Still—if one wants a career, the first rungs of the ladder are always the hard ones. Hadn't the lecturer said so?

She talked to half a dozen theatrical managers. None of them had anything for her.

One day she passed the slouchy man. She had learned his name was Mortimer and he had written some of the music for the show with which she had rehearsed. She had never heard of him before, but when he occasionally appeared at rehearsals everyone seemed to know him. She intended passing him without recognition, but he didn't wait for her. His hat was pushed a bit farther back, his hand was out.

"Hello, there," he said. "Where you working now?"

"I'm not working," she said. If he thought her a professional she'd keep it up.

"Ever have a part?" he asked.

"No, I never have had one. It's really what I'm looking for."

"They all are. But I wouldn't be surprised if Welling and Huff could use you. They are putting on one of those sweet little Spring-tra-la dramas and they need a girl for an ingénue. You certainly look the part. Like it?"

"Indeed I should."

"Here, take this card up to them—you know, office in the Murray Theatre, on Forty-fifth Street, and say I sent you. Might as well have a chance at it."

Helen thanked him and turned to go.

"Come in here and have something to drink with me," said Mortimer, nodding toward a restaurant on the corner.

Helen would have refused, indignantly enough—but, when a man has just given you an opportunity to get a position on the stage, with one of the best-known producers in town, it isn't easy to refuse to "have something to drink."

She nodded and Mortimer led the way into the restaurant, even during the day its ugly electric fixtures all aglow.

They sat at a little table for two, decorated with an electric lamp in imitation of a candle, its red muslin shade drunkenly askew. Helen felt as if she were someone else, as if she had stepped quite far down, into another personality. She heard herself answering questions, laughing at jokes, listening to Mortimer as he hummed "a new number" he was writing, keeping time by thrumming a spoon on the table. She ordered tea and heard Mortimer say something about "a pretty big jump off the wagon."

Helen had never been in a restaurant of this sort before. She liked dining at hotels and restaurants and felt she was not conventional, for she had dined unchaperoned with Douglas Towne, Arthur McConnor, half a dozen masculine friends. But this was the first time she had been in one of the Broadway cafés of the theatrical district, the first time she had ever been invited to "have a drink." Oh, well, as a stepping-stone to a career . . .

She made the session with Mortimer as brief as she could and hurried to the office of Welling and Huff. Welling and Huff always had a drama or two of the better sort playing in New York, with second-year companies on the road. They were responsible for the fame of half a dozen masculine and feminine stars. Helen had been to their office several times before, but had never seen anyone in authority.

Now, she presented the card Mortimer had given her and had hardly seated herself in one of the shiny red mahogany chairs when she was told to "go right in."

VII

In the private office, furnished with huge desks and chairs of the same red mahogany and brass cuspidors, she found a short, fat man with a ruddy face full of a network of veins and wrinkles. He was seated at one of the desks, but turned around in the swivel chair instead of rising as she entered.

"Good-morning," he said with heavy formality. "What can I do for you?"

She told him about her meeting with Mortimer, even found herself dwelling upon knowing him. She did so want to go on the stage and have a career.

The man—she found out later he was Huff himself—asked her questions about her experience, age, family. She felt again as if she were definitely offering herself for sale—and that she dare not make the price a high one. She wanted to say: "How dare you question me—Helen Taillore. I don't even know—people like you."

Instead she smiled cordially and answered as graciously as she knew how.

Huff looked through some papers on his desk, read over one of them, grunted.

"Do you know," he said, "I think you'll do. Type exactly. Not much of a part, about ten sides, but you look all right, know how to talk and dress—if you don't go to pieces on the stage. You know, I prefer an amateur every time, for bits. If they are the right sort they get them across better. Look at Marian Fish—made her what she is—never had a line. Lived in a little town in Iowa and now look at her. And Lucia Montaigne. You've come to the right place. Be good to us and we'll be good to you. Treat us square and there's none better. High-class stuff, that's the only thing we put on. This show now, with Florence Morris and Johnson Flare. . . ."

For ten minutes he talked about his plans, stars he had made. Then suddenly he became businesslike.

"Very busy to-day, and here I am, letting someone interfere with me. Well, Miss Taillore, I see no reason why you can't make good in this part. Effort, effort—and talent. We can hope you have that. Be at the Murray Theatre Thursday at eleven."

Helen left in an ecstasy of surprise and happiness. Was it possible that she could get an opportunity, a real one, in this way? Could a word from a man like Mortimer, watery-eyed, sloppy, have real weight? Could a little fat-faced talker really be an important figure in the theatrical world? An accidental meeting with a man she hardly knew and didn't like might affect her whole future, her career. Anyhow, she had her start!

Thursday she was very anxious to make a good impression. She knew how to find the stage this time. A dozen people were there. Huff greeted her as if she were an old friend and patted her on the back. She hoped he didn't notice that she instinctively moved away. He took her over to a small group and introduced her. She was surprised at this formality, for introductions were unnecessary, everyone who cared to had spoken to her while she rehearsed with the chorus.

"Miss Morris, this is Miss Taillore, a little girl who is going to play your sister. This is Miss Bush, Miss Hathaway, Mr. Dilling." He moved away, ignoring the necessity for anything further.

Helen looked at the little group. She had seen Florence Morris on the stage several times and had admired her. Some years ago she had cut out and put into a silver frame a picture of her and it had stood on her dressing-table for a long while. Miss Morris was disappointing. Her hair was too near straw-colour, her face was coarse-pored and slightly wrinkled, her eyes were a bit small, her mouth looked hard. She was dressed quietly and in good taste and yet the effect was flashy. Miss Bush was a middle-aged woman in a great purple cape, Miss Hathaway was little and pretty and bright-eyed. She carried her head pertly to one side. Mr. Dilling was thin and dapper.

Helen was anxious to see Johnson Flare and wondered if he would really be in the company. She imagined a romance. She liked to read things about him. Could he really be as handsome as his pictures?

Just as she got interested in Miss Bush's account of a "frost of a show" she had seen the previous night, two men came in. Miss Bush announced that one of them was Welling. The other Helen recognized as Johnson Flare. He seemed almost as handsome as she had pictured him, a little heavier, perhaps, a little older.

Welling was thin and carefully dressed, and wore a perpetual frown. Helen noticed that he said "No, no," or "not exactly," impatiently, to nearly everything that was said to him. He posed as being quite an intellectual. He spoke little, seemed to deliberate before speaking and then uttered some commonplace as if it were wisdom. Helen felt that she would always be afraid of him.

She met him now and noticed that he frowned as Huff introduced her. Finally, "All right, we will give Miss Taillore an opportunity," he said heavily and handed her her "part," blue-covered, typewritten.

Sitting in a semi-circle, they read the play, then. Helen was surprised to hear how stupid the lines sounded, how badly most of the company read, as if hardly aware of the sense of what they were reading. The play was a cheap melodrama, with a rural twist, the sort that happened to be having a vogue at that time. Helen's part lacked distinction. It was a "feeder" of the simplest type, but would give her an opportunity to wear several pretty frocks and remain on the stage most of one act. She had the opening lines in the second act and was on for two curtains.

VIII

Helen felt quite familiar with the theatre now. When rehearsals started, a few days later, she felt like a seasoned actress. She had her part letter-perfect in a few days and she quickly learned how to enter and exit and just when to cross over and where to stand. She listened attentively to Carson, the director. It seemed a sort of a game to see these grown-ups repeating lines and gestures, but it interested her. Already a contract had been signed and a salary of thirty-five dollars a week was in sight. Helen knew this wasn't a great deal, but she knew, too, that a hundred other girls would take it for the price. Besides, it would be the first money she had ever earned. Already she saw a trail of luxuries that it would bring to her and to her mother and to Penfield. Thirty-five dollars each week! She was very happy over it.

Although she soon knew all the company, no one paid much attention to her during rehearsals. Occasionally Carson spoke roughly to her, but he did that to everyone. Sometimes Johnson Flare stopped for a little chat.

Helen wanted to like Flare. He was a bit pompous, very conceited—but she felt that was natural for a star like him—self-centred. He always seemed on parade. Helen felt that he might be quite nice, if she really knew him.

She got her costumes ready, a morning frock, a serge afternoon frock, a pale blue evening gown. She would have preferred another colour, but other colours interfered with Miss Morris' gowns.

Rehearsals went on. Pictures were taken. Everyone was ready. Then there was a hurried trip to Atlantic City for a few days' try-out—Helen hardly realized anything those days—then back to New York — and the opening.

The opening night in Atlantic City, as Helen stepped out on the stage, saw the footlights and the black mass that represented the audience, beyond, she felt that she had forgotten everything she knew. She hesitated, frightened, then the lines came back to her. It seemed wildly exciting. Even after it was over she did not dare loosen the tension.

Back in New York, she felt cool, inert. On the opening night there she could hardly force herself to say the lines, to cross the stage. After the performance she was so exhausted she could hardly take off her make-up. She had learned to make up by pretending to undress slowly and watching Miss Hathaway, who shared her dressing-room.

She had met Douglas Towne a week or so before and had told him of her theatrical venture. She wondered if he were present. Flowers came to her from Arthur McConnor, Archie Day and Frankie Everett and Penfield.

But Douglas Towne did nothing at all. Was he disgusted because she had gone on the stage? After she had made a hit, a real one, he'd be impressed. . . . Wasn't everyone impressed, a little, with everyone on the stage?

Helen read all the papers the next day. One critic had been touched by the teary scene. Another admired Miss Morris' repression, though Helen knew it was only stupidity and lack of understanding that made her say her lines so evenly. A critic on a morning paper saw nothing in the play at all, but predicted a long run. An evening paper's dramatic reporter thought he saw a "new note," but predicted a sudden failure. In other words, the criticisms were quite as usual.

Two papers mentioned Helen. One, "Lucy Branch, the sister, was competently played by pretty Miss Helen Taillore, a young society girl," the other "others in the company were Hortense Bush, Helen Tailor. . . ."

She was an actress! A week passed, two weeks. Her nerves relaxed a little. It seemed almost natural to go to the theatre each evening and start making up at seven-thirty, to be there three afternoons.

Miss Hathaway was decidedly unpleasant. She insisted on telling Helen the details of a most unsavoury love affair she was in the midst of. Each night there was a new chapter. The man, it seemed, was married. He hated his wife, who hated him. His wife loved someone, but her husband was rich, so she wouldn't let him get away. But she had him followed and sent him anonymous letters. It was nauseating.

In the wings the conversation was stupid, cheap. She heard the same unpleasant jokes she had heard in the chorus rehearsal. Nearly everyone in the company made errors in nearly every sentence. They talked of numerous stage scandals and unpleasant relationships, some of which they were connected with. They were always quarrelling over nothings and said the sort of things you would expect to hear among people who were quite low. She shuddered away from them. When she was a star. . . .

IX

But, as Helen met other professionals at the theatre, it came to her, quite gradually, that conditions would be little different, even if she attained stardom.

Her days were spent the same as ever, among her own friends. She went to afternoon parties, luncheons, teas. She had to give up the evening things, usually, though she went to several dances after the theatre. Here she was herself, cool, clever, a bit of a snob, perhaps. And yet, even here, occasionally, she felt a bit of the stage creep in. She found herself using a word that a couple of months before she had never heard. She said sentences with a strange intonation of "toughness," stage idioms, even an error of speech appeared. She couldn't let herself go—step down—even for the stage. If that kept on—if she really felt that she was being definitely lowered. . . . But, of course, those things were just accidents. The stage wasn't what she had expected, but she must accept it and keep herself . . . after a while, when she had a real reputation. . . .

Back of the scenes at the theatre devoted to clever drama Helen found much to disconcert her. Huff, for example. One night she was waiting, in her blue evening gown, to go on. She felt someone behind her, before she could turn—felt a hand on her bare shoulder. She, to whom the touch of nearly everyone was always disagreeable! She turned around angrily. There was Huff, his red face in its usual smile.

"Did I frighten you?" he asked, and patted her.

She wanted to shriek—and it was time to go on.

When she came off the stage she thought about it. She couldn't say any-

thing—it would mean giving up her position. It was just some of the camaraderie of the stage that she had always heard about. Huff didn't mean anything, of course. A few weeks later he slipped an arm around her waist. There was such a little difference and she had seen so many arms around so many waists.

She told Huff she didn't like it and he smiled and told her not to be "so touchy." A week later he did it again. Of course she was angry, but she didn't say anything about it nor resign her position.

Helen thought Johnson Flare was a bit of an enigma. She imagined that there must be something behind his seeming simplicity. She had found out that he had come from the lower East Side, that his rise had been due to his own efforts. He had married, three years before, a girl whose people belonged to one of the social sets who had penetrated the Sunday papers, and he felt that he had taken great strides. He was fearfully ignorant about almost everything, even the drama, which Helen thought he would be interested in. Ordinary, every-day facts were mysteries. He was conceited to the point of childishness and took almost unbelievable care of his person.

He often dropped into Helen's dressing-room. At first she had admitted him only when she was dressed. Later, when Laura Hathaway laughed at her "prudishness," she did as she saw all other members of the company do, admit anyone who knocked, slipping on a dressing-gown. At first it seemed a wrong thing to do. Gradually, though, she thought nothing about it. After all, a dressing-robe does cover one much more than an evening gown.

One night, just as she started to dress for the second act, Flare knocked. She was alone, for Laura Hathaway was already on the stage and they could not afford a maid.

"It's me, Flare," he said. "May I come in? Are you decent?"

Helen didn't like the expression "are you decent?" though they all used it. She had slipped one arm into her dressing-gown and called, "Just a minute." The door opened. Flare came in and closed the door after him.

X

HELEN was too surprised to do anything but try to finish slipping on the dressing-gown. Flare caught her in his arms, kissed her shoulders, her cheeks, her mouth, her eyelids.

"Let me go!" she cried, and tried to strike him. He was very strong.

"You dear little girl," he said, "don't act so silly. I wouldn't hurt you for the world. I like you because you are so upstage and exclusive. My, but you are a little devil, aren't you?"

Helen was pummelling him with both fists when he moved away and smoothed his hair.

"My dear little wildcat," he said, "I really didn't mean anything. I'm really quite fond of you."

"You—how dare you!" broke out Helen, and started to cry. It wasn't comfortable to cry with beaded eyelashes.

Flare leaned over and patted her hair.

"There, there," he said, "I never meant a thing, honest, I never. Never thought you'd take it like that. But a cute little society girl like you ought to be used to a kiss or two. I'm sorry, come, let's kiss and make it up." He held out his arms.

"Please leave the room," objected Helen. But, even as she said it, she felt that she was without dignity, that Flare was unimpressed. She knew that she ought to leave the company at once. She knew that if things went on—this way—he'd try to kiss her again. It wasn't the kiss so much—one or two other men had kissed her—but this was so definitely lowering—steps down. Still, she did want a career and there were no chances she knew of for anything else. Too, the money every week, that was nice—there were so many things. . . .

She daubed powder on her nose and

rubbed a little more blue pencil above her eyes. After all. . . .

Huff had asked her to go to a little supper party he was giving the next evening after the show in a private dining-room of one of the larger hotels. A few of her company were to be there, perhaps ten others. It was the first party of this kind she had ever attended and she had looked forward to it.

After the theatre she removed her make-up hurriedly and put on a fragile white evening frock. The boy knocked to tell her that Huff was waiting. On the way out she passed Flare. He was smiling and put out his hand.

"Not still angry, are you?" he asked. She was feeling quite happy over the approaching party. Flare was to be there, she knew. At the theatre she must see him every day. She couldn't let him spoil things.

"No," she said, and put out her hand, "only you mustn't do anything like that again. I'm—not that sort."

She felt cheap as she said it, but it seemed the only thing to say that Flare could understand.

Huff and three others were waiting in his car.

XI

MEETING people she had heard about always thrilled Helen. Now, she liked meeting these people of the stage. Wasn't she an actress, too, one of them? When she was introduced, several of the guests complimented her on her work. She was a little disappointed in all of them, but she was getting accustomed to professionals now. The supper seemed a sort of a farce to her. The people seemed to be mimicking the things she knew. They tried to talk "elegantly," do the right things, have an "air." Through the thin veneer of their manners peeped unbelievable crudities. The food was excellent. She drank a little of the wine.

After the supper someone played on the piano which stood in one corner and several couples danced a little around the long table. People changed seats and continued drinking. A few guests left, not always remembering to close the door, which led to a corridor of the hotel. But it was late, now, and few people were passing. Helen was sitting quite near the door.

Huff came over and sat down by her. He started telling her about a show he had in mind for the next season, "with a part in it just made for you." He put a hand on her shoulder. She shrugged and moved away a little, stretching out one arm on the back of the empty chair that stood on the other side of her. Huff took his hand away. In a moment, though, he put his arm carelessly around her. She moved away a little further. She couldn't do more without making him angry. She knew that. He didn't mean anything. Other couples in the room had their arms around each other.

Flare, passing, saw Huff's arm, raised his eyebrows and smiled. Helen tried to smile back. Huff was talking and watching the dancers. Flare took her hand as it lay across the empty chair, raised it and kissed her fingers. Before she could snatch her hand way, she glanced toward the door.

There, in the doorway, the door half-open, stood Douglas Towne.

He caught Helen's eyes, dropped his own, hurried on.

Helen gave a little cry of pain. What could she do now? Flare smiled, grabbed the girl nearest him and danced off with her. Huff took his arm away and went on talking.

XII

HELEN cried all that night. There was nothing to do. One doesn't explain things like that. There was nothing to explain, anyhow.

When she went to the theatre she gave a two weeks' notice. She knew, now, she could never go on. The stage would always mean these things. Already they were crowding in on her, had hurt her. If she had been brought up differently, perhaps she might not have minded these things that the

stage meant to her. Others didn't. She couldn't stand any more. She wondered now how she had stood so much of it—the gradual letting down, these degradations. Maybe, to others, the stage did not mean these things—maybe, in her case, it had just happened. But if a career meant this. . . .

Perhaps women on the stage wouldn't do the things her sort could do—pretend—marry for money. . . . Still, position, money, nice things—that was what counted. She was a Taillore.

Huff couldn't understand why she was leaving the company. It wasn't anything he had done, surely? Why, he meant mighty well toward her. Flare couldn't understand, either. She remained quite friendly with both of them and spoke to them when she met them afterwards.

The day after her theatrical experience had ended, she had dinner with Arthur McConnor at Sherry's. He was allowing himself to believe that Helen preferred him to a career. He ordered dinner carefully, methodically, uninspired, as always. He ordered from the card and liked to consult the waiter needlessly about things. Now his big, pudgy fingers ran down the items. He smiled at her. And, when the waiter had gone, he leaned across the table.

"Helen," he said solemnly, his pink face even pinker, the lights reflecting his sleek hair, "Helen, I—well, aren't we going to get married, even if you are a—a prominent actress?" It was rather a poor attempt at a proposal and he covered it with an embarrassed smile.

As McConnor had ordered dinner, Helen had been thinking of dinners with Douglas Towne, the little things he knew, the "surprise" he always planned whimsically for each meal—Douglas Towne, what did he think of her? Would she ever have a chance—really to talk to him—to know him again? She could picture so clearly his soft black hair, his smoke-coloured eyes. So many times she had sat—just across the table from him—here at Sherry's—another time—an odd, dusty little tea-room—they had gone there to take refuge from the rain—a thunderstorm in early May. She had been afraid and he had leaned over and taken one of her hands in his slender fingers. He had said something quite foolish then: "Go on, thunder, now you can't hurt my girl." He was always saying silly, dear things. Now—

Arthur McConnor was talking.

"And we'll go any place you say and then come back here to New York and get a good house, a good big one, and we'll entertain a lot—and show people how. You know. Won't you say you'll marry me?"

Helen looked up at him. Douglas Towne had never cared—still, his eyes—when he half-closed them—but this—

She smiled.

"Why, yes, I'll marry you, Arthur," she said.

TWO-THIRDS of a woman's life are spent in hesitating, and the other third in regretting that she hesitated.

LIFE is a comedy to him who is loved, and a tragedy to him who loves.

THE FUGITIVE

By John C. Cavendish

HE was leaving this little town and he passed along its streets, not with contempt, but with a sense of singular detachment. He was conscious of the stores, the houses, the people he met, in a new focus; they appeared to him not in their familiar closeness, but as points in a far-away perspective, as if seen through inverted binoculars. And he, to himself, acquired some of this strangeness, this singular distance, as if there were a touch of curious magic upon him.

Perhaps he felt a detachment from the town because he held a secret from it. He had a purpose, an old intent, that had flowered now, that could not be told to anyone. The money that had recently come to him had been in his hands only a few days when he told the town that he was leaving soon to live in the city. He spoke something vague about "business"; he stepped about the streets briskly, as if on the path of a clear-cut purpose; he had money now and his briskness was accepted, his purpose understood and respected. Yet he had lied; there was nothing commercial in his mind; a complex and romantic impulse swayed him and he made no explanations of it, for he did not quite understand himself. He was indulging dreams as vague as mists, and vaguely lovely.

The open, sunlight aspect of this little town had never brought him content. For years he had held in his secret heart a desire of the mysterious, the hereditary gift, no doubt, of some vague, romantic ancestor. While still a boy he had walked through the wide, main street, almost the only street, of his town, expanding it into an imaginary arabesque of dim and crooked pavements, and peopling it with furtive, hurrying figures, romantic in their intents, inscrutable in their purposes. He had made himself a wanderer in the labyrinthine ways of strange and vast cities, and there he had enacted the melodramas that he craved. But no one knew of his fancies.

The people in his town considered him a desirable young man. He offended, so far as they were aware, none of their prejudices. Even in appearance he was commonplace enough to arouse no disrespect. He was slender and not too tall. His face was a trifle pale. His eyes were blue and a little faded. He had straight hair, the colour of old poplar leaves, and he wore it close and smoothed it to his head with a meticulous parting a little on the right side. He smiled easily, talked little, and when he spoke made his observations in a gentle voice. The girls in the town liked him well enough and after he came into his property they found him more than ordinarily agreeable. He had flirted mildly with two or three of them and with one a little more warmly than the rest.

Her name was Elizabeth. He liked her because her brown eyes grew sometimes vague and seemed to dream. He imagined then there might be mysteries concealed in her and the potential substance of luminously passional moments. But when she let him kiss her she did not arouse him; she offered her lips freshly, like a sister might, and showed on her face only a pleased and faintly embarrassed smile. Elizabeth was not the woman he desired.

Now that he was leaving to live in

the city, he thought of her a little sentimentally. He wondered what might have happened if he had made some positive declaration to her. For a few minutes he indulged a fancy of her spirit unveiled—the spirit he had sometimes imagined, from the deep vagueness of her eyes, to lie in concealment—and he pictured her glowing response.

"But Elizabeth wouldn't act that way," he thought.

Nevertheless he visited her the night before his departure. He was openly sentimental then, and so was she. They both sighed from time to time. He felt curiously uncomfortable and a little mean, as if there were a debt he owed her that remained unpaid. He kissed her several times; she clung to him a moment after their lips had parted. There was something that spoiled the pleasure of these moments, a ghostly mist of discontent that hung about the two. He went away early.

She smiled, however, when they parted.

"See me on your first visit back," she said. "And don't forget to write to me once in a while, Howard," she added.

He promised this to her.

II

He had often read of bachelors' rooms and desired them. There had been a young acquaintance in his town who approximated this pleasant possession. These rooms had not been his ideal, but they had something of that snug and aloof air he found agreeable. The small-town bachelor was not a person of great imagination nor given much to dream. His apartments consisted of a bedroom and a sitting-room. In this last he had a piano and near it a cabinet of popular songs. On a table there was a talking machine of the old type with a big blue and yellow horn suspended from a wire. He was fond of collecting picture postal cards and had a stereoscope in which he exhibited them.

This, in detail, was not the sort of a place Howard desired. He aspired to quarters less mediocre, more exotic and voluptuous. The first week after his arrival in the city he occupied in finding a location and thereafter in furnishing it. He rapidly filled three rooms with a miscellany of things he found admirable. He had a living-room, a dining-room—for he proposed sometimes to have his meals served there—and a bedroom. He lavished his most ardent faculties upon the living-room.

After he had crowded it with newly purchased articles he surrendered himself to the delight of it for several days. He had a big green couch over which was flung a piece of red silk, gold brocaded. There was a thick rug that received the weight of a foot yieldingly, like a pillow. In one corner he erected a lamp with a gold shade, standing on a gilt pedestal. He hung pictures on the walls, one of them of an almost nude woman, rather weird and extravagant in her contours. She was an example of bad art, but nevertheless striking, arresting, interesting, and therefore not without merit. Howard spent hours in this room, reclining on his sofa, staring at his nude, turning the leaves of his books under the light of the lamp. Then the desire of more human adventures returned to him.

He knew nobody in the city. He did not make acquaintances readily, and had no easy gift of conversation. Among several million people he was not striking and arrested no attention.

He went to the theatre; the serious plays bored him; he visited with more pleasure the musical comedies. Several pretty actresses interested him; he wondered how it would be possible to meet them; he thought of searching for the stage door and waiting until they appeared on the street. But this he lacked the courage to do.

He ate in several expensive restaurants. The women he saw there sometimes intrigued him.

One evening, as he sat in a large dining-room, eating at a little side table, a dark, slender woman walked

past him and seated herself near. A waiter came to her and she spoke to him a moment; he nodded and stepped aside. Evidently she was waiting for someone. Howard wondered why she did not wait in the lobby. He looked at her face, and in her olive, cool skin and the strong bands of the hair that covered the tops of her ears there was a quality that suggested to him the strong blossoms of flag-flowers, poised on straight stalks, thrust up out of the yielding grass. She was somehow mysterious; he wanted to talk to her.

She looked up at him and found his eyes on her face. At this he was confused and he dropped his glance to the food on his plate. His impulse was to look up again and to smile, but his courage was inadequate. Finally, he did raise his eyes and he saw that she was standing. She did not glance at him, but walked down the aisle of tables, passing his own, and disappeared from the dining-room. With an impulse that made him act without conscious resolve, Howard arose and hurried after her. He came out into the lobby, but she had gone. Two or three people observed him curiously, and he became conscious of their scrutiny. He went back and resumed his seat at the table.

When he returned to his rooms that evening he found himself lacking the content he had had in them before. He was no longer stirred by his pictures, his chairs, the light glinting on the edges of his books, the chromatic voluptuousness of the red and gold couch-cover. The city was disappointing him; but above his superficial irritation, his tendency to blame circumstances, he was aware of a personal inadequacy. This he endeavoured to deny by unspoken arguments, but it persisted, and when he closed his eyes to sleep it projected him into troubled and futile dreams.

The next morning he sat at breakfast glancing at the newspaper. The heavy-typed heading of a murder attracted his attention. He read the details of a brutal and violent death that had come to a woman in the southern end of the city. The name of the street where this had happened was mentioned several times. Howard wondered what sort of a place it could be. His old fancies of a labyrinth of dusk, mysterious pavements, filled with a fabulous crowd, returned to him. Later in the day he bought a map of the city and put his finger finally on the street where the woman had met her death.

That evening, a little flushed in his cheeks, a little tremulous, he took a street-car that carried him into the most unsavoury quarter of the city.

III

He got out at random. He was on a street of cheap stores. The show windows, inadequately washed, were crowded with conglomerate goods, most of them ticketed with the price. There was a saloon on every corner, with a group standing outside the doors of each one. The pavements were crowded and races mingled. White girls passed occasionally with black men, and more frequently black girls with white men. Fat Jewish mothers stood outside the store doors and their infant spawn darted from their skirts like swart, small demons.

It was essentially the atmosphere not of his every-day life with which Howard had so long intrigued his fancy. Yet he felt no immersion with it, none of that sympathetic blending into it that had been his inevitable course in his dreams. He was, if anything, uncomfortable.

It occurred to him, suddenly, that he had had no dinner. He paused in front of a small Italian restaurant that looked less uninviting than some of the other eating-places in the district. He tried to peer into the dining-room, but a thick and dingy lace curtain, pendant over the big, bulky window, obscured his scrutiny and presented him only with the movements of indefinite shadows within. After a moment more

of ineffectual hesitation, he opened the door and went inside.

He was in a narrow room full of crowded tables. As he stood hesitantly at the door, a waiter pushed past him, and a large tray missed his face by the fraction of an inch. He stepped forward at last and walked down a narrow path between two rows of tables. None of them was empty, but some had only one occupant. No waiter paid him any attention. A little bewildered, he sat down at last and found that he was seated across the table from a young woman.

His initial discovery of her embarrassed him and he dropped his eyes, having achieved no definite picture of her. He smelt a cheap and strong perfume that flamboyantly reminded him of her femininity. He looked up at last and found that she was staring at him.

"Hello," she said.

He was quite astonished that she had spoken to him. He stared at her a moment like a surprised school-boy. Then she smiled, her mouth twisted a little to one side.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked.

"I . . . I beg your pardon . . ." he stammered.

"What for?"

He was becoming progressively confused.

"I'm glad to know you," he said.

She laughed.

"Well—you're a little hard to get acquainted with. But maybe you'll do. There's a John of mine I've been waiting for here and he hasn't come in. Do you want to invite me for supper?"

"Why . . . that'd be a big pleasure for me," said Howard.

A waiter approached them. The girl gave her order with an easy assurance and Howard, unacquainted with the dishes, told the waiter to bring him the same. He looked at his companion with no abatement of his sense of confusion. He imagined her a dozen different things, but had no previous experiences by which to limit and fix his surmises. Certainly, she was an unique type of woman to him.

He looked at her face. It was enamelled with cheap cosmetics. Her lips were a startling and unreal red. Her eyelashes were sticky with a black pomade. Her nose was white with powder, and it tilted up aggressively. When she laid her hands on the cloth, he saw that they were white, but strong, like a man's. She did not speak directly from the centre of her lips, but twisted her mouth to the left and ejected her words obliquely.

He found it difficult to talk to her. He felt, almost instinctively, that his ordinary conversation would not serve. Occasionally he caught the girl looking at him, her eyes a little narrowed, her upper lip faintly puckered. Whenever he met her glance, his gaze wavered from her blue, hard eyes. That she was mysterious to him he admitted, but he was not comfortable.

"You're a queer one," she said, suddenly.

"Why?"

She shrugged her shoulders, a quick, vital gesture.

"What do you do, anyway?" she asked.

"I don't do anything," he said.

"How do you spend your time, then?"

"At nothing much. I haven't been in this city long. I spend a good bit of my time in my rooms. . . ."

"You live all alone?"

"Yes, I have a pretty comfortable place fixed up."

"Sometime you must let me have a look at it!"

They had finished and were standing up. Howard steered the girl through the difficult passage between the tables. He was now nervously wondering what he would do with her. He thought of asking her where they should go. They passed out through the door of the dining-room, walked silently through the brief hall, and went down two short steps to the pavement. Howard turned to his companion. He was

about to question her when someone gripped his arm painfully.

He turned and found a man staring at him. He was a thick, heavy fellow; his large hand almost circled Howard's arm; a shock of yellow hair fell out of his plaid cap into his eyes. Howard had never seen him before.

The girl made a cry of recognition.

"Dave!" she exclaimed. "Run along! I'm done with you! You stood me up proper!"

The fellow twisted his shoulders peculiarly; the movement suggested an unlimbering of tight, hard muscles.

"*This* is the gink that's going to run along," he said. He brought his face close to Howard's and his breath, like a warm unpleasant steam, was expelled against Howard's face.

"You run along!" he snarled.

Howard was not accustomed to being intimidated, and he only half understood his closeness to violence. Chiefly, he was very uncomfortable. His previous experiences offered him no guide for this situation. He was not even aware what he ought to say.

So, he simply stood, dumbly, saying nothing. He did not even step back, but with his hands at his side, and a faint frown on his pale face, he stared at the red countenance in front of him. He drew up one of his hands and nervously thrust it into his coat pocket.

The fellow named Dave observed this gesture but misinterpreted it. After his first bullying utterance he indulged a more careful observation of his opponent. He saw a slender, pallid young man, evidently of no great physical strength, whom he expected to quail immediately and leave the field. That Howard did not do so astonished him. Instead, he stood, saying nothing, expressionless and with every moment more inscrutable to Dave. Dave saw his hand go into his pocket. A chill of fear startled him.

"You've got something there!" he muttered.

He stared at Howard's concealed hand, at the pocket in which he had hidden it.

The pale young man in front of him still remained mute. He was entirely without motion.

Dave became more convinced that his supposition was true.

"I'll get you when you're not carrying *that*," he said.

He pulled down his cap and walked off swiftly.

To Howard, this melodramatic episode was quite inexplicable. He in no way undertsood the sudden evacuation of the enemy. But the girl was clutching his arm and looking up into his face with her eyes widened, her breath coming and going rapidly.

"Say!" she exclaimed. "I was all wrong about you. I didn't figure you out as a fella with a gun!"

"Gun!" exclaimed Howard, feebly. "I haven't got any gun!"

Instantly she clapped her hand over his pocket.

"For the love of God!" she cried. "You made a bluff like that! Say, you're some guy!"

She pushed her arm through his own, with a keen, virile enthusiasm.

"Take me to see that place where you live," she said. "I want to know more about you, I'm telling you."

He fell into her pace bewildered, and walked with her along the street, confused and uncomprehending. He understood at last that she wanted to visit his rooms. Some of the unconventionalities of that proposal forced itself into his cognizances, but he saw no way to deny her.

"We'd better get a taxi," he said.

She smiled enthusiastically.

"They don't have those things down here," she told him. "You'll have to phone for one."

He led her into the next drug store, and telephoned. They walked outside and waited, saying little. The girl stood very close to him, her arm tightly clasping his.

The cab came and he helped her in. As it drew away she edged near him and looked into his face, her eyebrows lifted.

"You don't look it," she said, "but I think you're the real thing."

Howard didn't understand her, and made no answer.

IV

He pushed open the door of his living room, hurried in and switched on the light in the lamp with the gold shade. It bathed the room in an aurine glow. Howard turned and looked toward the girl standing in the door. She drew in her breath a little, stepped in softly and closed the door with the care of one who thinks of a sleeper. She stood, then, just inside the room, looking about her. Her eye passed from the row of new books to the nude woman portrayed above them; she looked from this to the couch with its brocaded cover.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, softly.

She crossed the room to the couch and felt the cover between her fingers, touching the silk on either side of her with the palms of her hands. Howard came over from the lamp and stood near her, waiting for her to speak.

For a moment more she remained seated, and then stood up suddenly. She faced the slender young man in front of her. She looked into his features with the expression of one studying an enigma. He looked at her, wondering what her expression meant. He was uneasy; he regretted having brought her to his rooms; the strange virility of her emotions repelled him like an antagonism. She gazed at his pallid face; she felt an immense desire to know the thoughts behind his silence; her emotions were stirred by the inscrutable and half-heroic character she gave him. Suddenly she seized him in her arms and pressed his lips against her own.

He yielded like a frightened girl. He felt her warm breath go out swiftly against his cheek, leaving a moist spot. The pressure of her mouth was painful. Her strong hands against his shoulders held him to her.

Her breath no longer dampened his face; she had ceased to breathe. He heard the ticking of a china clock in his dining-room and seconds in incredible numbers were told off, and still her embrace persisted, her white hands holding him close to her. He experienced a sense of fear.

As suddenly as she had seized him, she dropped her arms and drew away her lips. Her shoulders drooped as she stood in front of him.

"Do I know how to kiss?" she asked. "Do I know how to make love?"

He was utterly unable to answer her. For him there was a demon in her incomprehensible virility, her complete difference. In her there was something of the crude terror of a wild storm. Now she was smiling.

"I never knew anybody like you," she said. "Don't anything ever make an impression on you? I don't get you! You're a queer one. Oh! I'm going to know you!"

Her last sentence beat upon Howard's ears with the clamour of a threat. A terror of reality seized him as in some fabulous and monstrous hand. But he saw his realities as nightmares. Even his rooms lost their closeness and faded into ghoulish contours, indistinct and incomprehensible. For a second, imposed upon the objects of his present terrors, he experienced one swift, clear vision of his home town, the wide main street, the genial drug store, the familiarity of all the faces. It vanished, and he found the girl with her incredibly awry smile staring at him.

"Aren't you going to show me any of your stuff around here?" she asked. "That's what I came for, wasn't it?"

He became nervously active. He led her about the room and pointed out each of his new possessions. He told her the shops they came from, and at her probing, the prices he paid for them. She fingered his little pieces of crockery appraisingly. She ran the tips of her fingers over the bindings of his books and asked him if he read them all. He was too maladroit to pretend that he did. He was preoccupied with his longing to get rid of her.

"I'll show you my dining-room," he said.

He took her into the adjoining room. He lighted the dome that hung over the table and for a moment she examined it with her head tilted back and her brows lifted. She turned then to Howard and invited him, with the cockney archness of her pose, to come near her. A dread of her red, clinging lips made his eyes widen and the pallor of his face more pale. He spoke hurriedly.

"And now," he said, "you've seen it all. I can't let you go all the way home from here in the cars. I'll telephone for a taxi."

He almost ran out of the room and took the receiver from the hook, as if he feared that she might physically prevent his desperate stratagem.

The cab was announced within ten minutes. Howard opened the door and stood out in the hall, waiting for the girl to follow him. She looked at him a moment, her brows puzzled, and then walked out of his rooms.

"I'm going to see you to-morrow night?" she said.

"Certainly . . ." he responded, weakly.

"Where will we go?" she asked.

"I don't know . . ." he muttered.

"I tell you where we'll go," she said. "We'll go to Madison Square Garden —and take in the fights!"

Her elevator came up and he pushed her in. He stepped back into the corridor and the cage dipped down below the level of the floor. Howard stood with his eyes fastened upon the void of the elevator shaft, a stunned horror in his face, as if he were looking down from the brink of a fabulous and unmentionable pit.

"Good Lord!" he whispered at last, "she means the prize-fights!"

V

He awoke in the morning and thought of her at once. His eyes met a square of sunlight thrown upon the coloured pattern of his carpet and it seemed to him cold, an impalpable rectangle of ice. He lay still awhile, miserable and weak.

Then he looked about his room. It was strange to him! He felt like a timid person lost in the woods. He sprang up out of bed suddenly, and seized his clothes.

He went through the process of dressing mechanically, but very fast. Still in his shirt-sleeves, he crossed to the closet in his room and dragged out a new yellow suitcase. He opened it upon his bed.

Into his suitcase he piled a potpourri of clothes, a strange and indiscriminate heterogeny. He filled it full and then forced down the cover until he heard the sharp click of the lock. Then he put on his coat, found his hat, and seizing the suitcase passed swiftly out of his bedroom, through his dining-room, his living-room, into the hall. He did not wait for the elevator, but ran down the stairs, steadying himself against the hand-rail.

He came out into the street and became aware of the city-sound. It hurt his ears, like a malign cacophony. He hurried through the streets, a little bent over by the weight of his suitcase. For the first time since he had come to the city, people who passed looked at him, for his face was feverish and haunted. A policeman at the corner noticed him and had an impulse to follow. Howard went on through the streets until he came to the station.

He bought his ticket and stood out in the train-shed waiting for his train. When it came, he went into the smoking car and lifted his suitcase to the brass carrier overhead. He dropped into the seat and leaned his head against the red, plush cushions. A curling, fading wisp of smoke came back to him from the man in front, and rushed up his nostrils as he inhaled. The acrid vapour brought a slight cough into his throat, but a smile came to his lips. He recognized the odour of this cheap cigar. It was a variety popular in his home town. He sighed. Before nightfall he would be back.

The train pulled out and the caco-

phanous clamour of the city faded to a murmur. It lost its dissonance; it no longer affrighted his ears. He watched the open country appear and slide past the windows of the train and a comfortable melancholy possessed him. Visions of the mysterious and the unusual returned to him; he thought of great cities peopled with the multi-adventurous and the strange. He relaxed his muscles and sank deeply into the smoking-car cushions. For the rest of the day he gave himself over to dream.

He was aroused by a familiar landscape. Presently the train stopped and he stood up eagerly. He took down his luggage and hurried through the aisle. He stepped down to the platform. A half a dozen townsmen whose recreation it was to view all the incoming trains stared at him and then greeted him. He passed along the platform and as he turned off into the street he came face to face with Elizabeth.

She gave him her hand eagerly.

"You never wrote to me!"

"No, I knew I was coming back."

"I didn't expect you back so soon."

"Oh, I soon get tired of the city—it's a cheap sort of a place . . . Elizabeth, I want to come and see you to-night . . ."

He looked into her brown eyes. They were, as sometimes they became, a little vague, a little as if concealing in their inner chambers the wraiths, at least, of visions and fancies. Howard felt encouraged. He pressed her hand. After all, there might be mysteries in her, and the potentiality of a fervid soul!

INFIDELS

By George Sterling

COLD and eternal stare his eyes of stone
As now, adored across the templed gloom,
The graven god exalts his granite room.
Implacably his acolytes intone:
The smitten gong makes answer in a groan;
Slowly the azures of the worship fume,
Phantoms awhile of that enduring tomb,
And "Life is evil!" now the bonzes drone.

Without, a darkness passionate with breath
Of unseen flowers—a fragrance at the shrine
Of two that lie incredulous of death.
Windless and moonless, the caressing night
Holds, as a rose her immaterial wine,
The moan and murmur of the old delight.

A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

By Thomas Effing

HE gazed around the room with a frown. Everything betrayed her consummate lack of orderliness. Things were in impossible places; slippers stuck on the chandeliers, a handsome opera cloak used as a table cloth, and an antique statue almost hidden beneath a large picture hat.

He remonstrated warmly with her over the disorder and in the heat of the argument poured out a glass of wine from the bottle on the table.

"Great Heavens," he exclaimed, as he quaffed it, "what fearsome brand is this? It tastes like red ink!"

She regarded him coldly.

"Naturally," she murmured languidly. "It is red ink."

FROM THE JOURNAL OF MADAME LEANDRE

By Helen Woljeska

I. We love in the man the love we imagine to have inspired in him.

II. One's philosophy is like one's skeleton—invisible, yet revealed in every action.

III. After a woman has clearly explained all the deep and urgent reasons why she should not take a certain step—she feels she has done her duty and immediately takes it.

IV. Neither his vices nor his crimes can make a woman leave the man she loves—but his virtues might. . . .

MARRIAGE, to a woman, is bound to be disappointing. It begins with a success.

THE pleasantest of all things is to be liked without being quite approved.

THE LOVE LETTER

By Arthur Fitzgerald

MARGARET wrote me a love letter.

I no longer love Margaret.

* * * * *

I saw Charlie.

"Did you ever get a love letter from the woman you love?" I asked.

"Yes," said Charlie. "She said that my hesitating words of love were sweeter than the music of a violin."

I met Henry.

"Did you ever get a love letter from the woman you love?" I asked.

"Yes," sighed Henry. "She said that when she looked into my eyes she trembled like an aspen leaf in the breeze."

I came upon John.

"Did you ever get a love letter from the woman you love?" I asked.

"Yes," breathed John. "She said that my touch was as cool as mountain mist.

* * * * *

Margaret wrote me a love letter.

I no longer love Margaret.

In my love letter she said: "Your hesitating words of love are sweeter than the music of a violin. When you look into my eyes I tremble like an aspen leaf in the breeze. Your touch is as cool as mountain mist. . . ."

PRODIGAL

By Hortense Flexner

I PRAYED the hours would pass,
Dream-lured and fleet,
I urged them on with whips,
That we might meet,
I cast them by—brave hours,
With dancing feet.

As one who runs, athirst
For song and light,
My purse I flung away
To ease my flight.
Now, at the inn's barred door,
My soul begs in the night.

THE EXPLOITED WOMAN

By Vivian S. Lindsay

I

THE first time I saw Mrs. McDow she was standing in the hotel lobby talking to Henry Watson, who was in charge of the horses I was to show at the De Soto County Fair. I had business with Henry, so I went up to them. Had I not had business with him, I should have speedily found some, for Mrs. McDow was the prettiest woman I had ever seen.

She could not have been more than twenty-one or two. She was rather slight and dark. By dark I mean that her hair was black and that her eyes were so dark that they seemed black, too. Her skin, however, was very fair, almost white, with just a faint flush of pink showing through, and her mouth was a vivid red. I realize as I put down the words what a poor thing a description can be. Somehow, I have made her sound like a vampire in the movies, when she was really the very opposite of that type. For with all her startling colouring, there was a delicacy of features and a refinement of contour, and the black hair was so soft and curly that she did not look at all like a stage type.

Henry Watson is always striking up acquaintances. Often I have had occasion to regret this fact, but this time I did not.

"Mr. Masters, I want you to meet a friend of mine."

Henry's tone suggested that they were very old and very close friends. But twenty years' association with Henry prevented my entirely accepting the familiarity with which he spoke. Henry was at one time, as he puts it, the "champeen" rider of the world, having won that distinction in Paris. That was in 1870. Since then he has gone the way of most horsemen, which is the way of oblivion. The only good thing about it is that he is so wrapped up in the glory of yesterday that he fails to see the drabness of to-day.

The introduction accomplished through Henry's usual formula: "I want you to meet—" Henry went on: "Mrs. McDow is from Hamilton, a town up near Chicago, and is going to show her husband's horses. I tell her she is sure to get all the blues."

Not to be outdone by Henry's gallantry, I added my assurances to his. Mrs. McDow laughed. I had already noticed that while her manner was that of a woman of a good deal of natural refinement, it was that of one who had not had many advantages.

"Have you been showing long?" I asked.

"No, this will be my first time," she answered. "I'm riding and driving, too."

"How do you like it?" I asked, not because I wanted to know, but because I wanted to prolong the conversation. An old fellow like me is never anxious to stop talking to a pretty woman.

"Well," she said, hesitating a little, "I don't know that I like riding. I got thrown this morning."

Henry had been quiet a long time for him. Now he broke in, excitedly: "I should say she did get throwed. How she ever kept from getting a broken neck is more than I know. She was riding a crazy mare that started bucking and throwed her about twenty feet. She landed right on her shoulders, too."

Mrs. McDow's face flushed. "I am afraid it was my fault. My husband said I held too tight a rein on her."

"Your fault nothin'. Why, that mare's just plumb crazy. That's what's the matter with her."

"Well," smiled Mrs. McDow, "whatever is the trouble I guess I have got to remedy it. I am due at the stables now."

She turned to me with her little, pleasant, not quite easy manner. "I suppose I'll see you again, Mr. Masters. Are you showing to-day?"

I replied that I was showing that afternoon and that I would surely see her and she left us.

II

I COULD hardly wait for her to get out of earshot before I began plying Henry with questions. But in spite of his introductory remarks, it seemed that he had met her only the day before. Nobody seemed to know much about her or her husband. They had a string of pretty fair horses which were entered in her name. Henry was sure, however, that she did not know much about horses and he added as his opinion that she was "scared to death" of them.

That afternoon while I was in the stables watching Jim, my darky, go over Lady X and seeing that she was as fit as brush and cloth could make her, Mrs. McDow entered the stables and came up to where Henry and I were standing.

"We have our horses in the next stable," she explained, "and I thought I'd come over and talk to you and Mr. Watson until it is time to go into the ring. I got nervous waiting."

She was in her riding clothes. Almost any woman who is young and slim can look her best in riding breeches and boots, but I had never seen any woman look as stunning as Mrs. McDow did. Of course, a really well-brought-up woman would not have worn such clothes at a public fair. She had on white flannel breeches, patent leather boots, a rather short and belted, bright red coat and a little black and white striped jockey cap, from beneath which the curly hair peeped out in a way that would send any man's heart thumping against his ribs.

It was an outfit designed for but one purpose—to attract; and it certainly fulfilled its purpose. It sounds and did look theatric. But, somehow, when you got a good look at the pretty, quiet little face of her, you forgot the thought that sprang into your head at first sight of the suit. Usually, when a man sees a woman dressed as if she wants to attract all eyes, he is going to think some rather uncomplimentary things about her. But I don't believe the man lives who could have looked at Mrs. McDow and remembered these things after one minute. Her eyes were too soft and her mouth too sweet and childlike.

But as she stood there admiring Lady X I found myself wondering how in the deuce she had ever come to go into the horse show business and what her husband meant by letting her wear clothes like that. This world at best isn't any too safe a place for a pretty woman, and seeing this one got up like she was made me feel a little sick. It was like sugar-coating a baby already too fat and pretty and turning it out to play where the cannibals could see it.

I had to stop thinking about her just then though, for it was time for the class in which we were both showing to be called. I remember it was for gaited mares under seven years, with either lady or gentleman rider. None but an exceedingly good horsewoman should ever show in this class. For one reason, a gaited horse is about as temperamental as a prima donna, and for another, the show-ring is not a drawing-room, not by any means. There a gentleman does not bow and let the lady precede him. It is simply a case of get there first, who can. The one keeping his horse before the judges and the grandstand most, always remembering he has the goods to deliver, is the one who gets the money and that is what everybody is out for.

This day there was a large entry, for there was a $500 purse, which is pretty good money for this class at a County Fair.

I remember there was Mrs. Mason, a woman who has been showing horses for fifteen years, and who is as lean and as wiry as the horses she rides. It is a man's-size job to hold your own with her. She has every trick of the trade down pat: all the grandstand stunts from slyly spurring her horse into what appears to be a dangerous animal, on up to falling and catching herself in the most breath-taking way. She can ride like an Amazon and she always gets the grandstand.

There were the Lang brothers from Kentucky, horsemen every inch of them and gentlemen to boot. And there was Ben Jebb, riding Nicotine, a mare to make your mouth water. And there was Helen Andrewson, famous as a rider of hunters. And there were probably twenty others, all of them old at the game.

A woman who had never been in the show ring had about as much chance in a bunch like that as a canary would have in the barnyard. As we rode up and down the track outside, waiting for the summons to go into the ring, I found myself wondering more about Mrs. McDow than paying to Lady X the attention I should, if I wanted her to win. For Lady X is cranky and was in a bad temper that day. But, as I said, I found myself thinking about and watching Mrs. McDow. Like the rest of us, she was trying to keep her mare quiet. That is not a particularly easy task with the band playing and with the air fairly charged with the excitement that goes with the show ring and which any horse gets as quickly as the rider.

The mare Mrs. McDow was riding was the same one that had thrown her in the morning, and she was just as crazy as Henry had said she was; the sort of horse that rolls its eyes and fights the bit. I could see, too, that as Henry had said, Mrs. McDow was scared to death. I don't believe the others noticed that, though. They had their eyes on her clothes. But I thought I had never seen anything quite as pitiful as the little white face of her. And right then and there it came to me that Lady X and I were not going to make much of a showing that day. Somewhere way back in my mind, something was calling me a soft old fool, but I knew I had ignored that voice too many times for it to be heeded now.

I had not seen her husband, but a little, weazen-faced man, looking like a prosperous jockey kept jumping around her, telling her not to get scared; not to hold too tight a rein, but to give the mare her head, etc., etc. He kept in up until I wanted to choke him. From experience, I know that the person going into the show ring has every detail of the work before him going through his head as if it were being ticked off on a typewriter, and about the last thing you want then is conversation.

But, finally, the gates swung open and down the track we went! Lord! Lord! I had told myself that was to be the last year I would show. I had made up my mind that would be the last season I would risk in the sawdust bones that should have long before won security for themselves. But as we went into the ring with the horses snorting the way a real horse snorts when he is up on his mettle, and with the thud-thud of their feet sounding sweeter than even darky voices singing "My Old Kentucky Home"—well, I knew then that no matter what I might promise myself, I would go right on exposing my bones to permanent disaster just as long as the Lord would let me. For it is something that gets into your blood and not even smallpox or boils will bring it out as long as there is a red corpuscle left in you.

In about a minute we were in front of the grandstand. Lady X kept me too busy at first for me to be more than subconsciously aware of Mrs. McDow, but after the first three or four times around the ring, I got a chance to steal a glance at her. She was riding fairly well, but she still looked scared. I just

had time to notice that her mare seemed to be going all right when the others shut her off from my view. We were riding like the devil. It was the first saddle-horse entry and every one of us knew it was just the beginning of the fight that would last for three days. Between men like Nate and Billy Lang and Ben Jebb and me, it is always a fair and good-natured fight, but still a fight it is. As I said, it is no place for a woman not brought up in it. Certainly it was not the place for Mrs. McDow. But her mare was still behaving and I could tell the grandstand was taken with her. I didn't wonder. I could imagine just the effect she was having with her little white face and her red coat and her black and white jockey cap. People are human and anybody human loves a pretty, plucky woman. And it certainly takes a plucky woman to show a horse against men.

So far the judges had let us take our own gait. That had been easy enough, for, of course, we all took the gait that showed our mares off best. But now the rack was called for. By this time we were pretty well settled down to our work and I was being able to keep an eye on Mrs. McDow, for, somehow, I was still expecting trouble. When the order came for the rack she just kept right on trotting her mare as she had been doing. I expected her to change. But no, she just kept right on with the trot. I grinned a little to myself and decided she had been pretty well coached in the game. I surmised that her mare had a poor rack and that she was going to put off the evil moment just as long as she could. Again, the judges called for the rack and still she kept on trotting. Then one of the judges went up to her. I could see he had every intention of calling her down just as hard as he could, but he didn't. He changed his mind, I guess, for I heard him say almost as if he were apologizing to her: "You'll have to make your mare rack if you are going to show her in the gaited class."

Then she did try and I saw right away there was going to be trouble. She raised the reins to set her horse into the rack, but the mare threw her head back viciously. Again she tried and this time the mare reared. I knew then that the mare was green at racking as well as vicious. I could not imagine why Mrs. McDow was trying to show her in that class. Later I was to know.

All this time I was trying as hard as I could to get to Mrs. McDow before the mix-up came, but before I could get quite up with her the mare reared straight into the air and there she stood. Then Mrs. McDow showed, just as Henry had said, that she knew nothing about horses, for she plainly lost her head. Instead of leaning forward and slacking her rein, she pulled back sharply and over the mare went. You could fairly hear the grandstand suck in its breath. As for me, used as I am to horses and accidents, I can never see a horse go over with its rider but that I turn sick. Always I remember Johnny Hamman and what he looked like the day we picked him up, not a whole bone nor a breath left in him.

Now, I was off Lady X in a minute and over to Mrs. McDow, and I could hear myself babbling, "Thank the Lord, thank the Lord," when I saw that somehow she had managed to get her feet out of the stirrups and had landed free of the mare, unhurt. I say "managed," but there was no management about it. It was just a case of luck. But then she showed how plucky she was. She was scared through and through; scared sick, but she got back on the horse. Of course, the grandstand went crazy then and the judges forgot to look judicial.

Then I saw something which turned the world red. I saw that little, weazen-faced jockey who had been giving her instructions before we went in. He was standing just inside the entrance to the ring where the grooms and owners often come to see the horses shown, and on his face was a grin of such utter, devilish satisfaction that I wanted to strangle him. I knew in a flash that he was her husband. I knew, too, that he had sent her into the ring on that mare

knowing perfectly that Mrs. McDow would get thrown and counting on the effect her fall would make on the grandstand and judges. He knew she didn't have the ghost of a chance to win that day, but he knew she would have the crowd with her every time after that when she went into the ring. I don't say he was wanting to get her killed or injured. A person can be thrown fifty times and not get hurt, but the fifty-first he may be killed or crippled for life. That chance he was willing for her to take. The thing turned me sick!

After that I was hardly paying any attention to the judges or to what I was doing. Hardly even had sense enough to go up for third, which was what I got. Nate Lang got first with Sadie Grady and Ben Jebb on Nicotine got second; I got third, as I said, and then came Billy Lang. Mrs. Mason got fifth. As we went out of the ring I couldn't even answer Nate and Ben as they joshed me about coming in third. I just wanted to get off by myself somewhere and cuss.

III

That night, at the hotel, the Langs and Ben Jebb and I had dinner together as we always do during the show season. Every year now for thirty years the Langs and I have made the rounds of the horse shows through the Middle West. Ben Jebb is new to the game, having been in it only four years, but he is the kind that old fellows like us welcome, for he is clean as a whistle and a lover of horseflesh through and through.

We were sitting there talking as we always do the first of the season about the good old days when every gentleman showed his own horses instead of turning them over to upper grooms and before these blooded young sports and athletic society girls got into the game. Of course, we always wind up by drinking a *crême de menthe*, which is as near as hotels in the Middle West get to a mint julep, and then we tell each other what old fools we are for not either stopping our grumbling or getting out of the game.

As I said, there we sat reminiscing, with Ben Jebb looking on and listening, when in came the McDows. She was in a black dress covered with some shiny stuff which made her just about as conspicuous as the riding habit had in the afternoon. And with them was just the person you might expect to be with them—young Hal Daning, one of the young bloods we had just been talking about.

Daning is the sort that any decent man instinctively wants to punch in the solar-plexus, just where he is the fattest and softest. His father is worth, the Lord only knows how many millions, and not knowing what else to do with Hal gave him a stock farm and put him on it. There young Hal entertains with parties where, according reports, champagne is all but used in the shower baths. I would believe anything I heard about him, so long as it wasn't good. He is short and fat and has a thick, dark face. About three years ago he took up horses and Lord! how the Langs and I swore and commiserated each other when he first came into the show ring.

But we need not have worried about him staying with the saddle-horse game. That was too strenuous for him. Now he just drives, lounging all over the seat of the vehicle. Of course, he wins most of the time, for every time he is defeated his method is to march up to the owner of the winning horse with his cheque book in his hand and ask, "How much?" He tried that on me once, but only once. I told him that I might *give* a horse to a gentleman but that he didn't have enough money to buy a spavined mule from me.

Now when I saw him with the McDows I commenced to wish I had not thrown away the blue that afternoon. But just as I was thinking it Mrs. McDow looked right at me and smiled. It was not a smile that went with the dress she had on or with the company she was in.

Nate Lang saw her and said to me:

"Mrs. McDow is just about the prettiest woman I ever saw. Except for the clothes she wears, she looks like she belonged in Kentucky."

That is just about as much as Nate Lang could say of a woman. Billy, who never talks much, looked his approval. And Ben Jebb—well, he looked just the way I would have liked to see the man look who was her husband.

"Fool stunt havin' her show this afternoon," went on Nate. "That was no class for her to be in. Just a lot of work and risking her neck for nothing." Then his voice became droll. "Kinda mean, too, to have such a disturbin' influence turned loose. . . . What was the matter with you this afternoon, Howard?"—this last to me in a tone a little too innocent. "You and Lady X didn't seem to have your old-time punch to-day."

"Oh," I came back at him, "last year Lady X and I beat you and Sadie Grady so many times we just kinda thought we would start you off in a more encouragin' way this year."

Just then I heard Ben say something which sounded like "damn." He hadn't been joining in the conversation, but had been keeping his eyes on the McDow bunch. I looked at them and there, sitting down at their table, was old Doc Trowbridge and Harry Brown, two of the men who would be doing the judging in the next three days. As judges they are all right, but as men to introduce your wife to—well, that's a different thing. Well, taking the performance all in all, it was enough to make old-timers like us give up the game. There wasn't any disguising the fact that McDow was out for blood, and it was plain to be seen that his wife was going to do the bleeding for him.

IV

THAT was the way it turned out. Mrs. McDow didn't ride any more crazy horses. She had got the grandstand with her the first day and that was what her little jockey husband had aimed for. Then he turned her loose, dressed like a *demi-mondaine*, on to the judges.

After that it was easy. He had pretty fair horses, although they were not in it with plenty of the horses shown. But once and twice every day Mrs. McDow went into the ring and every day she came out with a ribbon of some sort. Nobody could blame her, though. She was just as tickled as a kid—just as innocent about it all, too. And nobody could blame the judges, for that matter, for no judge who saw the smile that came to her face the day the first ribbon was tied on her horse could resist giving her another ribbon, just to see that smile again. I know I would have done just as they did. I know, too, that so would the Langs and so would Ben Jebb. For no matter what we thought of her husband, and the Lord knows what we thought almost turned the air blue, we were for *her*.

I say "we," although after that first night we never mentioned her. There wasn't much to be said. That is one of the funny things about the rules that have been laid down. If we were to see a pretty little bird caught in a steel trap, anybody would march right up and free it. But when it comes to a human, something that can suffer mentally as well as physically, then we just have to walk off and pretend we don't see. Lord! sometimes, I would rather be one of my horses than a man.

The last day of the fair came. We had all been pretty busy. There had been a lot of different classes to show in and there hadn't been much of a chance for us to visit around the way we usually do. That day Mrs. McDow came up to me in the stables. She had done it several times before, but as young Daning had always been with her I guess she had found me pretty gruff. But this time she was alone and I pulled out a box for her and had her sit down.

"I have been wondering if I would see you at the State Fair," she said.

"No," I answered. "I am not going

to show there this year. I don't like to be a sorehead, but I don't like the judges they have selected. I know them from former experience, and I think I'll stay away. Are you going?"

"Oh, yes, we are going to make the rounds. But I am so sorry we won't see you. You and I have got to be such good friends."

Her voice was like a lonesome little kid's and I was as pleased as Punch. Right then I felt I had to say something even if I did have to be pretty careful how I said it.

"Well," I began, talking slowly and trying to feel my way out as I went along, "it is mighty nice of you to want to see me again, and I know it has been a great pleasure to have met you. But, are you really thinking of going on with the show business? I don't want to seem impertinent, but I always hate to see a young, nice-looking woman getting into this game. Somehow, it is more of a place for a man."

She was looking at me a little puzzled. "But, Mr. Masters, what a funny thing for you to say. Why, just the other day I heard you telling that nice little Elizabeth Cain how glad you were to see her riding and driving."

"Well, but that is a little different," I said lamely. "You see, her father was a horseman and she has her aunt to go around with her."

"Well, I have my husband."

I felt like a fool, and I know I looked like one, too. I had just opened my mouth to get my foot in it. After all, what difference did it make? If her husband didn't have her showing horses he would probably have her doing something worse.

"Oh, well," I said, "I just didn't think you enjoyed it."

"I don't know whether I do or do not like it," she answered seriously. "I'm really afraid of a horse. But I love the excitement. And I love meeting people and the winning. I think it is amazing that I should win so often when this is my first year, don't you? And, what do you think! Hal Daning has given me Mabel Lee. Have you ever heard of her? I never had, but my husband told me all about her. Mr. Daning says that he does not ride any more and that he just wants me to have her so she can be sure to win. He says he never could bear to sell her or let a groom show her and that he knows I can win everywhere with her."

Mabel Lee! Did I know her? Did I know the filly Daning had paid $4,000 for! And he was giving her away! Giving her to Mrs. McDow with her husband's consent! Well, it didn't take any supernatural power to read the future of Mrs. McDow. . . . I saw the end then as plainly as I see it now in the paper I am holding. . . . But, to get back to my story.

That night the McDows gave a farewell party in their room. I went. It wouldn't, I thought, make me any unhappier to go than I was already.

Pretty nearly all the owners of the winners were there. The room was crowded. Men sat on the bed and in the windows and on the radiator and the few women who were there occupied the chairs. The air was so thick with tobacco smoke that you could hardly breathe. Mary Hanson, a young society woman who had just got into the show business, was there with her chaperone. It was evident that it was the first party of the sort they had ever attended and they didn't stay long.

After they left Mrs. McDow served drinks and sandwiches and then she sat down by Hal Daning in a corner. I looked at McDow to see how he was taking it. His little jockey face was one broad grin. He didn't have sense or decency enough to pretend to hide his feelings. Also, he was pretty drunk. I wanted to know more about him and his wife and I decided to find out. I waited until the others were talking too loud to hear me and then I said to him:

"Mighty pretty wife you have, McDow."

His grin grew a little broader and uglier. "Sure is. I can pick a winner, I tell you. Married her out of her mother's boarding house when she was

sixteen. Best day's work I ever did. A pretty woman and a horse!"

He gave me a wink that made me want to murder him.

I didn't stay long after that. I said I was tired. I was, too. But the last thing I saw as I left the room was Daning lolling back in his chair looking her over as he might a mare he was about to buy, and she was looking at him as I suppose any woman who at sixteen had married a jockey might look at a man who was young and smitten and a millionaire. Only, somehow, there came to me then something I once read. . . . I can't remember just what it was, but something about a rose blooming in a gutter . . . or a rose that tried to bloom in a gutter. Shucks! that isn't it. But it was something like that.

V

WELL, that was two years ago. That was the last time I was in the show ring. A week afterward a colt kicked me. It wasn't the colt's fault. I had just got too old to get out of the way. Now Nate and Billy Lang are the only old-timers left. Sitting here, I can see them now, going around the ring; Nate, tall and aristocratic looking with his thin face and white hair, and Billy, stouter and rosy cheeked. I suppose it won't be much longer until something happens to them, too.

But it is not of them or of me that this story deals. It is of Mrs. McDow. Often during these last two years, sitting here as I have to do now, I have thought of her. I haven't wondered about her. I didn't dare to do that. It would not have paid to turn my imagination loose, for destruction was sure to come to her. Just how it would come was the only question. And—just a few minutes ago, I came across it in big type: *Young Millionaire Daning Sued for* $100,000 *by Horseman for Alienation of Wife's Affections.* Of course, the paper played the thing up for all it was worth. There is no use to go into sickening details. . . . On the whole, I was rather glad to find down there at the bottom just a few lines evidently stuck in almost as the paper was going to press: *"Woman in the Case Commits Suicide."*

Lord! Lord! What a mess Life is! There are so many things I look back on that I would so gladly forget, but, somehow, this is the thing I should want most of all to never have known.

Two years . . . well, she held out pretty well. If there hadn't been something in her as fine and as sweet as her eyes were, the poison would have done its work in less time than that. Altogether, with the vision I have of her in her little red coat and her jockey cap, I am not sorry that Lady X and I got only third that day.

CONSIDER, my son, the wall-flowers, they whirl not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these.

FAINT praise ne'er won fair lady.

SHE CONFESSED TO HER HUSBAND

By Leon L. Fleischman

I

AFTER his third coffee and cognac Larrabee invariably flowed down the stream of his memories, and I always availed myself of the educative journey. I'm inclined to believe he was as much of an old Satyr, an unmoral pagan, as he allowed one to think he was. But his amused candour, his constant puzzled wonderment at his own unscrupulousness amazed me, delightfully, so infinitely, that I never bothered to be disgusted with it.

He was in the middle fifties when I knew him; a tall, straight figure with a fine, big head that he carried as if it were crowned. With its lustrous white hair, brushed back from the broad, unlined forehead, the delicate, generous nose, and the frank grey eyes, alert, vibrating, sparkling, he called forth a sometimes reluctant tribute to his bold and free and picturesque charm.

"Yes," he said, after the waiter had placed the cognac before him, "the essential truth—you never get it! Not even in our literature; I mean the English. Not the real, the piquant, the illuminating truth. Everyone hides it or shies from it! Like a woman I knew: she told the customary sort of truth; she told the truth—almost!

"It was ages ago; I was twenty-eight-nine—thereabouts; a young one. Wise enough; too much, I suppose. Really just as wise as I am to-day; now, I've only a greater collection of affirmative experiences. Then, though, I had codes; . . . and how they do expand! I remember, at that time I'd said to myself one couldn't pay sentimental respects to the wife of one's good friend. That was, for me, one of the things one 'doesn't do.' Of course I agree one really doesn't; it's beastly and unthinkable. But, alas, I did; I hadn't, you see, any sense of responsibility.—What else is there but to be amused, know other people, 'get at' their—yes—their truths?

"The fellow's name was Smith—George Smith, we'll say. We'd been youngsters together, philosophized ponderously and playfully, fallen in love with, in the calf days, the same girls; he always admired my taste, and was too timid to become involved on his own initiative. He was heavy; no poetry, no air—but we were comfortable together; he knew me perfectly—and forgave me my imperfections. I'm not certain, though; he thought, perhaps, I wasn't as impossible as I sounded! He was a few years older than myself, and married when he was thirty-two. I'd been abroad on business for more than a year, and when I returned he'd been married about that length of time. I'd not met the girl and, naturally, I had my prejudice; and when I did meet her I didn't care for her.

"She was clever enough; a naturally quick mind, well-informed, and, more to the point, intellectually inquisitive. Pretty enough, too; or, rather, interesting. One didn't, consciously, notice in the first glance; the eyes reverted to her to find something the subconsciousness, almost with a jolt, had brought out. I don't know definitely what it was, but one did look again.

"She was about twenty-five, slim, graceful in a leisurely style, with fine brown hair that had golden shadings.

Her complexion was pale, her lips were full and gave the impression of quietness, of restraint, in the way they were firmly closed. Her eyes had the same sense. They were brown and, at first thought, clear and frank. But, if you're sensitive to that sort of thing, you felt that they were 'discreet' eyes; that there was much that they did not care or dare to show.

"I think she didn't care for me, either. Or perhaps she did; perhaps I appealed to her for one reason or another, but she was annoyed, in the beginning, at my attitude of indifference. It's difficult to say. And I *was* indifferent. Naturally! Then, too, she didn't immediately appeal to me. I say 'immediately'; after a time, though—several times, in fact, times when I was alone with her in the evenings while her husband was engaged in his study—I came to recognize her as an individual. I stirred, you might say, to an interesting possibility, under a curious suspicion. I awoke to the interest of her eyes; discreet eyes—I have emphasized it—and that's definitely intriguing because discreet eyes are an indication of some indiscretions, potential or consummated, to be hidden. Don't you think so? But eyes, whether discreet or indiscreet, aren't your hobby, what?

"I, however, I am not so profound. And, I confess, I enjoyed our conversations. Books, art, manners, morals—oh, we were beautifully intellectual! But there were hints—I couldn't say of what definitely—but hints of greater mental freedom and curiosities than Smith, I am sure, suspected or appreciated in his wife. I told you he was rather heavy, didn't I? He was; straightly, finely so. Anglo-Saxon; not at all of a Continental. You know?

"All this she expressed in a frank, impersonal way. She had, I think, the most passionless, the coolest opinions about every subject under the sun. I'd listen to what she'd say, and suddenly I'd wonder what she, the girl behind those clear, discreet eyes, really felt, what co-ordination there was between her emotional self and her words.

"For you, her comments might not have assumed the interesting character of personal indications. You would have taken them at their face values, as the counters of a somewhat free and impersonal conversation. Alas, I saw them, as I say, as the strange, finely hidden aspirations of her soul, her temperament. I mean, I wanted to think them that. At the time, I wasn't certain; I was eager only to determine.

"Smith took them at their face values, too; with the amused tolerance manifested towards the mischievousness, the precocity of a beloved and understood child. I remember once he stood before us with a kind and happy, a nearly fatuous smile, and exclaimed:

"'You two are so much alike! Dorothy talks as if she knew of all the sins of the seven hells, and honestly comprehended them. You both talk of your tolerances, your devilishnesses, but that's all there is to it. You're both as meek and mild as lambs! Each of you has too many—' I don't recall the word he used; to-day it would have been 'inhibitions.' That's become a dreadful chewing-gum *cliché*, hasn't it?

"I think it was the sixth time he said something to that effect that Dorothy and I looked at each other, and, while we smiled in agreement to him, smiled—just smiled understandingly at each other. Understanding of what, you ask? Oh, merely of that; what I fancied was a secret understanding, you see. And since it was secret, that, while it did not make my heart beat faster, opened up vistas of—well, of further psychic agreements!

"It was a week or so later that Smith dropped me a card asking me up for dinner, and I joined them. While we were sitting over our liqueurs, Smith remarked that he'd been invited to a boxing match that evening. He was eager to go; if I'd stay and entertain his wife, by George he *would* go! I wasn't keen at the prospect; not a bit, for a moment, at least. And then—I don't know what devilish, prophetic

mood urged me—I sprang to my feet, exclaiming:

"'Very well, go on! But I warn you; I'll make love to Dorothy! May I? I warn you I shall!'

"He chuckled.

"'I know you,' he answered, 'and I know Dorothy. You're the same sort. Go ahead!'

"'No, no,' I protested, carried away by the impulse, insistent, 'I mean it! Wait a moment: Dorothy, may I? Because if I mayn't he must stop here.'

"'Of course you may,' she replied with a light laugh. 'I expect it of you.'

"I didn't entirely like that 'expect'; naturally. I couldn't quite sound its depths. But I didn't take it up. . . . She walked to the door with him, clinging to his arm, teasing him, playing with him, really caring for him.

"'Until later, you two bluffs,' he called back as the door closed behind him.

II

"DOROTHY selected a comfortable chair, sank into it luxuriously with a sigh of content. She wore some sort of dark dress, chiffon I think, embroidered with silver thread; a soft, undulating dress that clung to her and seemed strangely part of and alive with her soft breathing, her slightest movement. I could see a narrow slippered foot and the gleam of a silk-clad ankle, and, even in the dim light of the shaded lamp, the golden shimmer in her hair. As her head rested upon the back of the chair even the pearls that hung about her white throat shone warmly with the sweetness of the contact. . . . Ah, I know what you will say: that I was abominably subjective, sentimental, forcing a situation! Well, perhaps. At any rate, whether she was individually appealing or not, she was femininely so. Oh, extremely!

But Smith was right; and I sighed as I studied her and, resting my chin on my palm, began to talk about books, books, cursed books! The realization of such innocuous dullness irritated me, finally, beyond endurance. There was she, the graceful woman in the dim light—and here was I. I jumped upon the stage of a more interesting drama and, walking to her, took her hand and kissed its palm. I did not know—how could I?—what its reaction would be; but it pressed itself clingingly to my lips. Her eyes, unclouded, smiled up at me. 'This is the prologue,' she said.

"'The prologue,' I answered in as gay a tone, and kissed the length of her pretty arm; and, leaning over, the fragrant, dimpling hollow of her throat, while she touched her face to mine and kissed, oh, ever so delicately, the cheek turned towards her.

"Well, there you are! In that evening she was daintily tasting the pressed perfume of herself. She stood aside from herself, as it were, to gather the full fragrance of her sensations. Sweep her from her feet, even if one wished to? Never! It was for her a pageant playfulness, an intellectual, a sensual curiosity. She admitted it after I had held her, for an instant, close in my arms and softly, gently kissed her lips.

"'I love it!' she exclaimed with the frankest of smiles, the clearest, the most unveiled, the cleanest of glances. 'But it's wrong, isn't it? Tell me it isn't, though! I want you to tell me it isn't!'

"Now I—I was in a gay mood, a joyous one. Alas, I am always flippant! I answered her, 'More wrong for me, you know; because I am his friend. Not so wrong for you, because you—you are merely his wife!' And we laughed into each other's eyes. 'But wrong, wrong just the same.' And I kissed her again.

"She smiled. 'There are so many joys to be had out of life, aren't there?' she said pensively. 'So many ways of getting them! My mother—did you know?—was a Frenchwoman; that's where, I suppose, I get my desire for—well, for spiritual adventures! George is so—decent! I wouldn't for the

world, for anything, hurt him, make him unhappy!'

"'Of course not,' I told her. 'That would be damnable!' And she kissed me lightly again, and took up a book lying upon the table.

"As I said before, there you are. She had a true appreciation of the harmony of sense. . . . But just before we heard the door open, the sign of Smith's return, she sighed. 'It's really wrong; you know it,' she informed me; and, with a shrug and a smile, 'Of course,' I replied.

III

"When Smith came in, I told him I had made love to his wife; I knew he wouldn't believe me. And I was right. He merely put his arm about her while she cuddled to him—and chuckled contentedly.

"It was only when I was walking homewards a little later that I realized to what depths I had descended. I was sincerely annoyed. 'See here,' I said to myself, 'that was hardly necessary! It was delightful, I'll grant you, and rather curious, but it wasn't as if you'd cared. Why—why, in Heaven's name, did the wild impulse, the morbid curiosity, the encouraged stimulation, make you select Dorothy—his wife! Where, oh, where, are the codes of yesterday?' And I said 'Damn!' fervently and honestly, even though there was a little song at my lips.

"And then—would you call it a case of conscience?—it flashed upon me that I didn't know, understand Dorothy so deucedly well, for all that. I really couldn't judge, in spite of the indiscretions of which I knew she was capable, of what indiscretions she might be guilty. Confound it all, she was contented with her life, she did love him, she did like to be comfortable, she couldn't—oh, egregious ass that I was! —she couldn't, she wouldn't—tell him! Brrrr! I shivered! Really, that reaction bothered me, worried me until I slipped into sleep, and it was only when the next day passed without a message that I was able to laugh freely at my folly.

"Oh, no, I didn't try to communicate with her. Pourquoi? What was to be, would be. I had no troubling impatience, no disturbing desire to see her now, immediately, at once. It was far pleasanter to speculate on what subtle, interesting glance I would receive when next I saw her in the ordinary course of events. And that chanced, unexpectedly, when I was dining at Old Martin's a few nights later.

"I must have been seated for some time before I spied them at the other end of the room. She saw me. By Jove, she didn't bow; but she did smile slightly, and she lowered her eyes with a seeming almost of demureness. At the first opportunity I threaded my way to their table.

"When George, when Smith saw me approaching, I knew at once I was in for it. He clenched a fork, dropped it, became furiously red, and then pale. As I stood beside his table he arose and, in a low voice that might just as well have been a volcanic roar for the feeling it expressed, annihilated me.

"'You're a beast and a cad,' was his opinion, 'a treacherously selfish hound! This is the end. Get away from us!'

"That wasn't pleasant, was it? Of course I flushed; that couldn't be helped. He hesitated, and sat down. But he was right, wasn't he? I'm such an unthinking fool! Well, I looked at him, and I smiled deprecatingly, and agreed with him. 'I'm afraid you're right,' I said quietly.

"And as I bowed to the lady in the case, on taking my leave, her eyes shot at me, so quickly that only I could see it, a glance that was devilish and mocking. So I bowed lower still, as before a conqueror.

"No, dear fellow, never trust a woman. They're not rational or logical, and they're so deucedly much cleverer than we are. You're only safe when it doesn't matter, really, how untrustworthy they may be! . . . Waiter, some coffee—and a little cognac!"

I laughed. If you wanted to remain with him you couldn't but laugh with him or at him. But I wasn't going to let it drop at that.

"You're mixed!" I charged him. "She confessed to her husband, didn't she? She told the truth!"

Larrabee rubbed his fingers along the side of his nose and looked at me tenderly, pityingly.

"Yes, my dear fellow, she did confess, indeed. Can't you picture it? Her shy confession of my flirtation? Yes, even of hers, which was 'oh, so innocent!' and even of my kisses, 'so unexpected!' Don't you see him, not comprehending, and then, as her arms linked themselves about him, his temporary righteous disapproval of her, his absolute and furious condemnation of me? Yes, in the love of his heart, and from his great understanding, he forgave her—her innocence; but I—I was the wolf! Indeed, she confessed! Could she have paid a more delicate tribute to their friendship, her comfort? Alas, even my kisses, you see, became sacrificial! But the truth, the reality, the essential, illuminating truth, never, never did she confess!"

I was impatient.

"Oh, very well," I prodded him, "the illuminating truth—what was it?"

"Ah, don't you see," he cried exultantly, leaning across the table, "that she *wanted* them, that she *liked* them? That, that, dear fellow—that was the only truth!"

He picked up his cognac, and grinned at me.

THE GREY MICE

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

THE dreams of the world are small grey mice,
And every night they creep
From cupboards full of memories,
Up through the chinks of sleep.

The dreams of the world are sly grey mice.
Like little thieves they come,
Searching the hushed, moon-silvered rooms
For some forgotten crumb.

The dreams of the world are small grey mice—
Out of the dusk they dart;
And O, each night their sharp teeth gnaw
The crust that is my heart!

THE notion that a woman is offended by hearing her rival praised is not true. What offends her is the suspicion that the praise is honest.

THE WIND DIED YESTERDAY

By Harry Kemp

THE Wind died yesterday,
And it will blow no more
The heaping little silver waves
Against the shining shore.

The Wind died yesterday:
It will no longer run
Along the purple-shadowed grass
And chase the laughing sun.

The Wind died yesterday
That piled the sky with light
And sent the silver-bodied clouds
Like solemn swans in flight.

The Wind died yesterday
And stark the forests sleep,
Their blowing summits surge no more
With tumults golden-deep. . . .

O, Wind, arise again
And brighten all the air:
Strike silver motions through the trees,
Wake colours everywhere:

Purple and Green and Gold
Wait your creative breath! . . . .
O, Wind of Love, strike through my soul—
Without you, all is death!

LIFE is a dark room with two doors, the one labelled "Too Soon" and the other "Too Late."

A WIDOW is the epilogue to a tragedy. Or the prologue to a farce.

A CLOAK HE GAVE A BEGGAR

By Lilith Benda

I

SHE was fabulously rich, the widow of a copper magnate who cloistered her like a sultana and, at whose death she wept tears that were spring freshets heralding a forthcoming burst into bloom. She had inherited her beauty and Latin *élan* from her mother, and from her father, a celebrated dilettante somewhat of the Cyrenaic school, her quick wit, her zest for existence and flair for the beautiful.

"My father," she said once, "assumed control of my education. The dictionary played a great part in it. When I was a little girl not a day might pass but that I had to walk for an hour with a fat dictionary on my head and a basin of water balanced upon it. Every drop spilt meant a sweetmeat the less at teatime. You see, I was being taught the poise of Javanese women. They have a grace of bearing than which there is nothing more beautiful. Do you think I've attained it? Do you think my education was in vain? You don't really, do you?"

And she tripped across the room all agog for adulation, craning her neck for glimpses of herself in the mirrors, with an artless and whole-hearted joy in her own loveliness that provoked admiring smiles from the far-famed savants of her train.

No American of note in artistic or diplomatic circles but who hankered for invitations to Adelon Forsbrey's Wednesday receptions; no continental celebrity but had spent the most stimulating hours of a visit to New York in her great Louis Quatorze drawing-room. Mrs. Forsbrey had a theory that art, to arrive at one of its golden periods, must go hand in hand with aristocracy, that the great artists must be prominent figures in the social world. And she justified her yield to a thousand contradictory caprices, her delight in dress, and dances, and frivolities, and word-bandying with the literati, by announcing herself a pioneer of this millennium.

When a grizzled and gloomy Russian dramatist came to New York on a lecturing tour, Mrs. Forsbrey ciceroned him to a midnight revue. When a first master of orchestration arrived to conduct a new symphony she entertained him by introducing a score of negroes fresh from the South into the Louis Quatorze room, who, wassailed into extemporaneous outburst, kept the composer glued to his chair until early morning with their wild croons and bizarre choral effects. . . . She backed a radical magazine, and revelled in the fashion periodicals. She had championed many an unknown musician, author, painter, and with her unparalleled influence propelled him to fame.

It was Mrs. Forsbrey, too, whose efforts made possible a performance of the Ring with modern scenery that electrified New York. But she left the opera-house after the first act of "Die Walküre," to be found later by her friends at the piano singing "The Banks of the Wabash," in close harmony with Clayton Demarest.

"Too much Walhalla," she explained. "Too high an altitude—it palls. I like sycamores and candle-light, and close harmony and out-of-date songs. They put me in a pastoral mood. Make me

feel domestic, and nicely, comfortably not-worth-while."

She had hair, always redolent of a scented shampoo, with that pale and silver-shot sheen to it which the ordinary blonde attains only by moonlight. An apple-blossom complexion, a little pouting mouth whose indefiniteness of outline enhanced the infantine effect of perpetually appearing and disappearing dimples, a short face, the nose delicately retroussé, the cheek bones a little high, the chin a little inclined to point, to her beauty there was that touch of the irregular, of the piquant and bizarre which, by its very waywardness, made her all the more captivating. A little above the average height, slender and small-boned, hers was a fragility that charmed to the degree that it revealed an underlying robustness.

There was something gossamery about the woman and something gamin. She was made for the enswathing caress of soft-tinted chiffons, for the deft manipulation of those draperies which floated about her blandishingly as she perched on the arm of a chair or curled among the cushions of a divan or—and it was her most characteristic pose—stood facing the men over whom she queened it on her famous Wednesday nights, head tilted to one side, one hand at her hip, the other employed in graceful gesture that hinted at French ancestry, and by focusing attention upon dimpled elbow and dainty wrist tended to mollify the trenchancy of quips always cooed in madrigal manner.

More than any other feature it was her eyes, big, lazy-lidded, a-twinkle and of a brilliant ultramarine blue, that gave her face the fresh, unimpaired look of languorous gratification, quite on the safe side of satiety. Mondaine to her finger-tips, she tempered a patrician aplomb with urchin archness. When her mockery began to border close upon mordicancy, she struck a "good fellow" note, and the sting was gone. When an adorer, his importunities ignored, accused her of cruelty, she flashed a dimple, or assumed an air of remorseful beseechment that returned him, unprotesting, to her fold.

For there was not a man of her cortège, not even her special bodyguard, the gnarled and gouty Sylvester Grahame, whose rose-tinged tales of the Orient had set the world a-marvel, and clean-timbered, rangy Clayton Demarest, proud of his prowess at polo, and a little diffident before the literati, but who had aspired to sentimental encounter with the Forsbrey and, foiled, remained not a little in love with her. Adelon met, with a serene satisfaction on her pretty face, the gleam of a passion-kindled eye. Adelon had known many times the proximity of an anxiously beating heart. But always she cooed ardour away to a safe distance. Always she employed a subtle address in compelling unqualified reserve in the worship tendered her. For all her unconventionality she had never aroused a breath of scandal, and while with her men rarely aspired to marriage, they were easily reconciled to her ban upon more ephemeral relationships. When occasionally a disgruntled one bewailed the skill employed in kindling, only to quench, she would murmur:

"I love nothing better than to have the surface of my heart ever so gently stirred."

All her cajoleries concentrated in a little shiver of delight, a pleading look and lowering of lashes that silenced all protests.

II

It was only after she met Nigel Geddes that the first, slight eddy of malicious comment began to circle about.

He was *fin de siècle* to his finger-tips, young, dark, perfectly groomed, and of an exaggerated pallor—a poseur always a-hanker for adulation and commanding it by virtue of a supple wit, a melancholy hauteur, a mastery of musical prose, and an uncanny hold over women. His eyes were a little too big and dark, his lips a little too full and red, his hands a little too long and white and slender.

With an aristocratic descent, little money, an insolent charm of manner, and a literary bent, it was his prestige at the game of appropriating any woman a whim designated, and discarding her at will, that antagonized those scions of ultrapatrician stock among whom his vanity dictated that he should obtain a footing. It was the malicious purr in his flawless prose that antagonized the men around Adelon. People feared him, for he wrote tales that were little more than ugly interpretations of intrigues in which he had figured, all embellished with a tracery of glittering epigrams, all apotheosized into masterpieces of sleek malice and svelte innuendo. Old Sylvester Grahame snorted a contemptuous "Rococo!" after reading one of the stories, and hunched his knotty shoulders in hurt surprise when Adelon Forsbrey, disregarding his ultimatum, took up the cudgels in Geddes' defence. With her accustomed zeal for establishing new stars, she made of the man her pet hobby.

She exerted her every influence with editors and publishers until within a marvellously short space of time Nigel Geddes was the lion of the hour. She gained him access, and eventually a welcome, in the most exclusive of drawing-rooms. And what was infinitely more momentous, for the first time in her triumphant career, she indulged in a battle of wits with him that took on the aspect, as week followed week, of a sex duel.

For Geddes, with unparalleled effrontery, refused to adore from a distance. For the first time Mrs. Forsbrey's coos and cajoleries fell upon deaf ears. Although she never saw him alone, although in her attitude toward him she clung tenaciously to the platonic rôle, it was significant that she should countenance his air of proprietorship, the innuendo in his every careless glance, his every silken compliment or disdainful affront.

Grahame and Clayton Demarest led the satellites in disliking and fearing the man. But he ignored them all with derisive unconcern. And gossip began to circulate, a mere faint flutter that according to the whimsies of the gods, might die out innocuously or flare into flame. Mrs. Forsbrey met her mentors with the usual coos, and little shivers, and beseeching looks. When Geddes was present a new, strange expression would flit across her face, an alarm, a delight, a something panicky and daredevil, and at the same time almost maternal, and full of a haunting sweetness. Daily she granted him a more intimate footing until he became not only the star of her Wednesday night gatherings but a welcome dinner guest, and was admitted finally to the little room—a sort of sanctum sanctorum—where the elect met at the tea-hour for cocktails and gabble.

There was a certain intimate note to this little room, with walls hung in old blue taffeta, and Watteau *fêtes champêtres* to gladden the eye from a pair of Louis Quatorze panels. The indispensable mirror was so placed that if she craned her neck a little Mrs. Forsbrey could catch her reflection from the spot where she always sat, curled cosily amidst a heap of soft-tinted cushions on a couch at the corner of the fireplace, with the flames playing upon her their ruddy, seductive glow.

She was seated so very late one afternoon, her gloves and cloak beside her ready for a dinner party, and awaiting the inevitable escort, Clayton Demarest. At her prettiest in a diaphanous overdraping of shell-pink tulle through which a close-clinging sheath of crystal sequins gleamed, she toyed nervously with a flamingo-red ostrich feather fan, unable to banish from the atmosphere a certain vague unrest.

Old Sylvester Grahame was there, in an ugly humour, grunting and uncommunicative, save when he vouchsafed a remark to a Swedish sculptor he had taken under his wing—a meek, pale young fellow all stammering subjection to Adelon's charms and diffidence before Nigel Geddes' ease and flow of talk.

There was a rosiness in Mrs. Fors-

brey's cheeks not entirely due to the reflected firelight, a snap and exaggerated lustre in the great blue eyes that, darting about the room, always returned to fix themselves in a look half-daredevil, half panicky, upon Geddes' face. An impalpable tenseness stole over the little group, an effect as of the pitting of forces for decisive combat, as of a high-pitched movement imminent and to be forestalled by no flash of mocking dimples, no coo of beseechment, no regal tilt of chin, nor flourish of fragile white arm. Insolently at ease as ever, Geddes lounged at Adelon's side, his nonchalant gestures and lazy remarks insinuating a proprietorial right there which all her raillery, and even the perceptible edging away of her pretty form, failed utterly to quell.

To overcome the general unease, Grahame launched into a discussion of the young Swede's sculpture, and disconcerted by the strain in the air ventured upon no less trite a view than that the final judgment upon genius must be sought from posterity. Geddes' well-bred laugh broke in on the truisms.

"What, after all, is this posterity? It's fame for the moment that the worth-while artist must have. Posterity puts Cleopatra into the movies, and Napoleon on the vaudeville stage. Posterity advertises a talking-machine in the monthly magazines by picturing the masters of music as so many mannikins squatting at the feet of a smug Harlem couple in a steam-heated flat."

Grahame replied with a grunt, Mrs. Forsbrey with a half-hearted laugh. After a long, uncomfortable pause the Swede, writhing in his chair, delivered a carefully prepared speech projected to express his respectful gratification with this admission into a great lady's circle, and acclaiming her the queen of a new era, who counterpoised the wit of de Staël with a beauty that shamed Récamier.

And when Adelon, always at her loveliest after a compliment, turned to the new satellite with her little shiver of delight, and pleading look, Nigel Geddes broke in upon her pretty speech of acknowledgment.

"Man," he remarked irrelevantly, "always strikes me as the first, blundering creation of a great artist; woman as some third-rater's magnum opus."

"Misogyny's out of date, my dear," Mrs. Forsbrey cooed, "no longer the right thing."

She snuggled more alluringly among the cushions, and yet with her eyes always roving about in a startled way, and returning as if in fascination to the big dark ones that met them with so serene a self-assurance.

His glance swept the pretty form as if with a disdainful caress. He turned his shoulder upon the others, lowered his voice confidentially. "There are actually women in the world, you know, who check the tendency to go gypsying which should be their pride, women—"

"Nigel," she broke in nervously, "you always remind me of a youngster in knickerbockers who's lost all his illusions. I can just picture you when you were a little, world-weary five-year-old, sing-songing double-entendrish epigrams before a mirror and studying Wilde and Rouchefoucauld for your kindergarten primers!"

"—Women who check the tendency to go gypsying which should be their pride."

Adelon's smile faded when, ignoring her interruption, leaning a little closer, smiling somewhat ominously into her upturned face, he went on:

"Really rather canaille—that sort of thing, you know. . . . Your female emancipate dons a soiled smock, hugs Ellen Key to her heart, bores a dullard for a week every once in a while, and believes herself a priestess of free love. . . . The lady excites repugnance—granted. . . . And yet how infinitely more noxious the flinty coquette!"

"Physician, heal thyself!" Before a certain courteous sneer in his words, Mrs. Forsbrey appeared almost to cringe away, and rallied, with a strained note in her voice, a shrill hint of effort in her laughter, to the usual pleasantries.

"You're becoming too abominably intolerant toward those of us who don't suffer from—what shall I call it?—from—er—nomadism of the affections. First thing you know, you'll write a sermon on the subject, and call it 'Why Girls Don't Leave Home.'"

"How infinitely more noxious the flinty coquette!" Having waited politely until her voice dwindled into a shaky laugh, into an uneasy silence, he continued with a cool disregard of her attempt to steer the conversation to other channels: "Coquettes bask on cheap little triumphs that are really ignominous defeats. For it's the essence of the masculine temper to conquer or quit if the fancy be stirred. . . . And only an occasional mood of satiety turns a coquette's adorers from the hussies around the corner to her side."

Grahame snorted. The Swede fumbled at his necktie. Adelon's flinch at the all too obvious personal application was followed by a deepening of colour, and an angry sparkle in her eyes.

"Coquettes aren't flinty, Nigel," she cooed. "The poor, tender, soft-hearted, self-sacrificing creatures have been quite too mercilessly sour-graped. For, let me tell you, they frivol, and laze, through life, only because men like nothing better than a frivol, and a laze, and a touch-me-not lady."

But for all her laughter and twinkling eyes, there was a lack of spontaneity in Mrs. Forsbrey's gestures, a slight break in her voice which betrayed little heart for badinerie. She received this man's soft-spoken affronts with a somewhat deferential acquiescence well-nigh incredible in one so essentially the autocrat of her glittering little world. Old Grahame grunted a contemptuous "Faugh!" and looked at Adelon with paternal reproach at her countenancing of this brazen-browed outsider, against whose admission to the inner circle he had railed so bootlessly. The sculptor, already in a state of subservience to Mrs. Forsbrey's allure, and yet with the timid-souled's admiration for ruthless gallantry, asked why it was that squires of dames, always on the alert for new victims, invariably disparaged the victims, and flung them without compassion into the refuse-heap.

Geddes shrugged.

"A follower once asked Confucius to have the sheep offering abolished. The master said: 'Thou lovest the sheep: I love the rite.'"

"All wrong, Nigel!" Mrs. Forsbrey put in. "It's the Lothario who lays himself down on the altar of romance. His ladies are mere trivial side-issues. They should be spared. . . . My father used to tell me of a wise hare who, when a god in disguise came begging for food, said, 'Go, gather wood, and I will sacrifice my body to furnish you with a meal.' But, he added, 'If there be any insects in my coat, I must not let them die.' So he shook himself carefully three times, and leaped into the flames. . . . Well, why not have mercy, Nigel, upon the poor little fleas?"

She leaned toward him, laughed provocatively, only a second later to look askance and lower her lashes. Upon his face a vague menace seemed to hover, blending with the chagrin of a youngster who cannot understand why a new toy is withheld from his reach.

When finally he spoke, it was with an odd effect of recitation. His voice became a smooth murmur, as if he were quoting, perhaps from one of his own stories, a passage hugged close to its author's heart, and relevant by chance to the subject at hand.—Christianity, with its two Marys, has been blamed for bringing woman-worship into the world. As a matter of fact, the thing's a bane no more Christian than classical. The artists of the great Christian era painted their wantons as madonnas, and, to the glory of the new, sad god, wrought little laughing, couchant nymphs in bronze. . . . Go to ancient Brittany for gyneolatry's fountain-head—Elaine its ideal, Jeanneton d'Arc its exponent. Go to a land removed from monastic influence, a land asquirm with Druid rites, and grey-green plaints,

and spirits attune to the eternal wail of the sea.

"Woman a hazy vision," he purred after a moment's pause. His back was turned completely now upon Grahame and the sculptor. He leaned, always a little closer, toward Adelon, his smile a sort of bantering insult, until the fine-featured, over-white face, with its lips that were a little too full and red, was within a few inches of hers. "A hazy vision—the supreme object of life—an intercessor for man among the supernatural powers. . . . And the inevitable result?"

He caught Adelon's eye, fixed it with his, smiled his smile that menaced and caressed. "The inevitable result? *Demi-virginité*, and of all unwholesome types, the just-so-far temptress! . . . And yet Breton legendry sounds a prophetic note. For your just-so-far temptress yearns for high treason—baits for grovellers, and scorns her prey. She's a Godiva agog for her Peeping Tom. To win her, just blacken her eyes, or her reputation, but never her boots. . . . And among the women of Brittany sprang a first tribute to treason. Among them one finds the first note of sympathy for the arch traitor of all. A woman saint, I believe the story goes, found Judas on a rock in the Polar Seas. Once a week he passed a day there to relieve himself from the fires of hell. And she wrapt a cloak he had given a beggar about him to temper his sufferings."

The well-modulated purr trailed into silence. Only Adelon's sigh, and a guttural "Rococo!" from Grahame broke in upon a long, uneasy moment of suspense. For despite their casualness the soft-spoken words conveyed a sort of declaration of mischievous intent, the caressful threat of this boyish, boudoir Judas who upon a groundwork of sordid intrigue, and at the price of a fair name, fashioned his little masterpieces of silken prose.

The lips that were a trifle too red and full curled arrogantly. The eyes that were too big, and soft, and black looked with confidence into those lazy-lidded blue ones that met them at once with invitation and defiance, with reproach, curiosity, entreaty, alarm.

Here was the crux of a sex duel, whose evenly matched opponents, intent upon sortilège and ambuscade, smiled courteously at each other, and disregarded the onlookers. In the room there was no sound now, save for the crackling of logs, no movement save for the dance of flames, and shift of ruddy tints.

It was a full two minutes before old Grahame arose, dismayed, full of forebodings for his lady's welfare, and yet aware that the amenities demanded his withdrawal in the face of so obvious an engrossment. With the Swede at his heels, he bowed himself out of the room, hunching his shoulders and grunting forlorny at Adelon's too perfunctory "Don't go."

III

Scarce had they left the room when her absent-minded smile faded into the expression of pretty entreaty as Geddes lolled a little closer to her side. Together with a twinkle, a raptness stole into her eyes. The little shiver passed over her, and resolved itself into her customary equipoise as provokingly she flashed her dimples and toyed with the great, flamingo-red fan.

"Dear Nigel," came the celebrated Forsbrey coo, "why are we always bickering, you and I? We're becoming nasty, and snippy, and vulgar. Let's settle our differences here and now." She snuggled more cosily among the cushions. "Be a darling, won't you, and stop looking at me with fell intent in your eyes? Stop bringing this atmosphere of love-feats and Don Juaniness into my little retreat. I thrive on good-fellowship, and will have nothing more. Let's re-establish it now. . . . I want you to come to dinner very soon to meet a man who will be of great service. He's an admirer of yours, and literary critic on—oh!"

The coo dwindled into a faint, fright-

ened scream. For Nigel Geddes, with supreme effrontery, had slipped an arm about the unassailable Forsbrey waist. The face that was of a shade too extreme a pallor smiled close to hers. And one of the hands that were a little too white, and long, and slender fastened upon her wrist in a grip that mocked her futile tug.

She looked at him with more beseechment than anger in her eyes, as the colour left her lips, and she struggled away toward the end of the couch, nearer the fire, with the shell-pink draperies hovering dangerously close to the flames, until his exclamation of concern blent with her frightened cry when the edge of one of the long, floating sleeves caught fire.

Both sprang to their feet, and immediately he tore away a strip of tulle and extinguished the flame. Immediately, too, his arm was about her again, and the hand that was too long, and white, and slender cupped her uplifted chin. She met his eyes with a look so captivating an admixture of delight and dread that, serene in his gratification over a coveted bauble, he failed to catch the sound of footsteps on the staircase, failed to notice the sudden terror on her face, the change of expression that bespoke deliverance from a spell, failed utterly to distinguish anything more than a little too imperious a note in her sudden "Don't! . . . I tell you, don't!"

He leaned closer. "Little novice—learn to grant and never to exercise the power of yea or nay."

"Bray or neigh! Let go of me, you donkey!"

The words came with a vicious little snarl. Her eyes snapped, and at her temples delicate veins bulged and throbbed. So abrupt was the transformation from hesitant surrender to an almost vulgar rage that his lips parted in astonishment, and his grip at her waist loosened until, with a quick, lithe twist of her body, she was free of his embrace . . . but only an instant before Clayton Demarest appeared in the doorway.

At once the two, adepts at attitudes, regained their self-possession, became no more than a pair of well-bred people engaged in desultory talk at the fireside. Adelon caught up her cloak and gloves and advanced toward this good-looking blond giant who, alone with Grahame, was admitted to terms of camaraderie that warranted his entering unannounced. She advanced halfway across the floor, and stopped short.

For Clayton Demarest was looking, with a strange expression, at a loose strand of hair, oddly incompatible with her smooth coiffure, at her hands trembling at the finger-tips, at the torn sleeve, at the veins pencilled in so distinct a blue on her forehead and temples. His eyebrows lifted in surprise, and suspicion, and displeasure, before which she stood aghast and tremulously at bay.

Geddes had followed her. He stood leaning against a table, about to make his farewells, when, as if in a desperate effort, so rapidly conceived as to include awkward manœuvring—a final, frenzied attempt to obliterate the suspicion from Clayton Demarest's face, Adelon ignored the outstretched hand. In a voice chill and very low, but calculated to reach the other man's ears, "You are no longer welcome here, Mr. Geddes," she murmured.

"Understood, of course," he purred in response. "But I thought you a game enough loser to want to shake hands."

Without another word he walked leisurely from the room, self-assured, proprietorial. Clayton Demarest's lips tightened with suspicion. Adelon's fell apart in dismay.

IV

He called it "Our Lady of Coquetry," and a week after its publication Mrs. Forsbrey was damned.

A slender little volume bound in pearl grey leather, its appearance of unobtrusive elegance little indicated the havoc it was to arouse. Coming as it did hard upon its author's unexplained

excommunication from the Forsbrey fold, when tongues wagged ominously, the book proved a culminant agent in fanning a scandal to high flame. Adelon's prominence as arbitress of her glittering circle, Geddes' swift rise, with her aid, to lionism, the faint-hearted efforts of Clayton Demarest and Sylvester Grahame to repress the aspersions all served to goad the gossips. The world snickered, firm in its conviction that Nigel Geddes had kissed and told; so that, having resorted to the time-worn stratagem of telling without the kiss, effectively he poured the anathema of a hurt vanity upon Adelon Forsbrey's head.

He laid bare the soul structure of a coquette, reviling, as if with a caress, its shallowness, and tawdriness, and squalor. He satirized the empty triumphs and "so-far-and-no-further" manœuvrings, told how she employed every enticement, exerted every influence to add another reverential adorer to her train. He seemed to take his readers into a whispered confidence with the plot of how a man who, scorning the type, made use of one of its exponents to establish himself in the world, found his disdain greeted with ardour, was wooed by the lady in abject fashion, and after playing the conqueror with little relish for a few weeks, tossed her without compunction into the dust heap. With the characters thinly disguised, everyone laughed, and affected to recognize what rapidly became "the notorious Forsbrey-Geddes affair."

A drab and paltry tale! And yet there was many a condemner of the code that prompted its authorship who marvelled at its artistry, its scintillant wit, and passages of exquisite word-music, at the sure markmanship that laid low Adelon and her court beneath the rain of an urbane invective, and especially at a certain uncanny affability almost conciliatory in the suggestion it made of a juvenile reprisal. It was this very note of graciousness which made the world laugh all the more heartily. The book damned Adelon . . . but unequivocally it damned Geddes as well.

For the Forsbrey was too pretty and too affluent entirely to lose her footing. The satellites continued to surround her, although with sour faces, with commiseration, reproach, absolution in their eyes, and all eager to view a Magdalen penitence, all agloat for amenities on a less strait basis.

As for Geddes, the butt of his ridicule had played too considerable a part in his rise to fame, had been too lavish a patroness. His weapon of suave derision recoiled upon its wielder. His book was condemned as an infamous betrayal. Society turned an obdurate shoulder. Doors were closed to him. Men of influence, whose good will he sought, failed to recognize him in the street. He who thrived on adulation and drawing-room triumphs found himself relentlessly ostracized. He who had been the idol of the moment became "that cad," "that cur," "that dastard."

V

It was a month after the publication of "Our Lady of Coquetry," when the Forsbrey scandal was at its height, and derision was being heaped upon its protagonists, in terms of contemptuous pity for Adelon, and scathing disgust for her self-styled betrayer—a lazy day in April, a day all buoyancy and languor, with the city warmly tinted by a red-gold sunset, and aromatic of the first breaths of springtime.

But in Geddes' library there was only a sickening odour of unextinguished cigarettes and wilting flowers. Regal tulips, crimson and orange, drooped in a Lang-Yao vase. The windows were closed and the shade drawn. Cigarette smoke drifted heavily about, dulling the vivid golds and blues and scarlets of the furnishings. The room was hot, littered with papers, dusty, untidy. With a dressing-gown of royal purple wrapped about him Nigel Geddes lounged, smoking, in an Etruscan armchair.

His black hair, usually so sleekly brushed back from his forehead, hung in wisps over his eyes. His pallor had intensified, and he appeared to be fighting, with his air of insolent unconcern, a sickly disconsolateness that pervaded his whole being, to refuse to admit to himself that his yield to a hurt vanity, had inflicted upon this vanity a most crushing and deadening blow. No longer the lion, no longer the worshipped Lothario, with coveted doors closed to him, funds low, publishers chillingly uncommunicative, a meteoric career at its ignominious finish, there was yet an engaging, boyish quality in his scowl that bespoke his pained bewilderment at this hue and cry over a youngtser's boomerang revenge. He seemed half-heartedly to be brooding upon some scheme of deft retrieval when the door-bell rang, and at once the inherent poseur in the man flashed an expression of insouciance across his face.

But his eyebrows lifted at a cooing "You needn't announce me" from the other end of the hall—lifted slowly and then twisted into a frown as light, quick footsteps approached. And his lips fell apart a little when Adelon Forsbrey tripped into the room.

No fallen idol here! No note of chagrin in the mischievous tilt of her head and flash of her dimples. No Magdalene dowdiness to the spring toilette, all a faint fawn colour, with a great fox scarf tossed about her shoulders with just the proper flourish, and a little toque set on her head at just the proper ultramodish angle!

Her eyes were starry, and her cheeks flushed by the breeze. She looked about the darkened, smoky room, threw up her hands in amazement, hurried without a word across the floor, pulled up the shades to admit the spring sunshine, flung open the windows to the spring freshness. Then with the dimples at their prettiest, and the little white teeth agleam, she went over to him, outstretched her hand, and then without rising he vouchsafed a perfunctory handclasp, "Isn't it glorious not to give a damn?" she lilted. "In broad daylight I have entered a man's apartment with the eyes of Clayton Demarest and Sylvester Grahame full upon me, and I don't give a damn! Really, you know, it's rather thrilling and most awfully good fun—this not giving a damn sort of thing."

He tried to withdraw his hand, but she clung to it, drew herself a little closer, drooped her head for a moment, then lifted it slowly, proudly, until the little chin was high in the air, and her eyes, half-closed, looked down into his with a rapt, faraway sweetness.

"I've come"—her whisper was barely audible—"I've come to thank you, Nigel Geddes. I've come to ask your pardon, and to tell you I'm ashamed and sorry. I've come all gratitude and self-abasement to thank you for your malice, and your sneers, and your lies—to thank you very sincerely, and very, very humbly, for a lost reputation, dear."

She turned away after she had spoken, and looked about the room, shaking her head as if its untidiness jarred upon her holiday humour. An abandoned cigarette sent up its malodorous curl of smoke. She extinguished it, wiped the dust from a buhl table with a lace handkerchief, slipped out of the room with the vase of wilting flowers quite as if she were at home here, and returned to gather up the papers strewn over the floor, fold them neatly, tuck them into a desk drawer—and all the while he stared at her, gloomy, astonished, yet revealing an instinctive pleasure at the sight of this slim, well-poised, graceful woman playing with such apparent relish the maternal soigneuse.

Finally she seated herself near him, only to rise after a moment, and approach, always with that air of shyness, and daring, and delight. A little chuckle, as if she were launching herself on a supremely reckless adventure, and she was perched on the arm of his chair.

"I was out automobiling with Sylvester Grahame and Clayton Demarest.

They've been the most loyal, and the most exasperatingly compassionate of the lot. They were so full of forgiveness to-day, so stubborn in their belief that I hid a bruised soul behind a smiling face, that I simply had the car stop here, and left them without a word of explanation. You should have seen their poor, shocked faces. . . . For the first time in my life I knew what glee was! Oh, Nigel, but it's a stimulating diversion—this kicking up of the heels!

"Rather dreadful at first, of course," she continued, while the flush in her cheeks deepened as, upon his face, his old, caressful mockery began to battle with the gloom, "I'd been years steering clear of the scandal-mongers, years building up an impregnable position. I thought myself so absolutely safe, when along came a little bookful of lies, and they all—all of them, the staunch ones, the tried and true ones—all believed it. Clayton Demarest was for challenging you to fisticuffs, but he believed it. Old Grahame called you a rococo Iscariot, but he believed it none the less. Rather dreadful at first—the looks, the serene and sickly smiles, the snickers behind hands, the pats on the back, the moral indignation, the insistence on a penitential air, the pity, and complacency, and forgiveness! . . . They all thought that book my Waterloo, but rather, it heralded a triumphal entry. I've passed through Gethsemane, Nigel, and reached Eldorado! For I've learnt to kick up my heels, and the price was cheap."

Shyly she laid a hand on his, as if all eagerness for a heartening response, and, when he remained silent, turned her head to meet the rays of the setting sun that put a glint of rose and gold on her upturned face, so gentle now, and wistful beneath its nimbus of silvery blonde hair. "You who understand women, you who have laid bare every intricacy of our shallow little souls, you who know it all, . . . now I am going to enlighten you a little, now, in my turn, I am going to lay bare the soul-structure of a coquette. . . . Nigel, give me a thousand instances to the contrary, and I'll still maintain that no woman has ever queened it, no woman has ever had the gift of swaying a throng of men to her will, of keeping them at a distance, and herself on a pedestal, but who has pined for footstool honours, pined to be some likable reprobate's door-mat."

Unconsciously she shivered that captivating little shiver of hers. "There's something so chilling in adoration from a distance." The pleading look flitted across her face. "One finds one's self begging for something, one scarce knows what, for something that frightens one so. . . . Many's the time, after an evening full of compliments and triumphs and such stuff, I'd look in my mirror, see myself there at my best, and everything would sort of—sort of go stale, and I'd cry because I was lonely for someone I'd never met, someone who didn't think me up to much."

She was turning a plaintive face to his when her eyes chanced upon a mirror across the room, and immediately they began to twinkle. She craned her neck, tilted her head, beamed her approval at the reflection—always the Forsbrey, all the more Forsbrey for this moment of solemn self-revelation.

A little pause, with a sigh for his silence, and a dimple for the softness that was stealing into his eyes, and she went on:

"Love's a tricky thing. The duke turns from his duchess to grovel at a dancing girl's feet, the poet from his bluestocking to a peasant who cooks his soup well. And a woman may turn from the solvers of problems, the smashers of ikons, the wrestlers with existence, the men of ideas, of fame, of achievements, turn to look around for someone who's a little wicked, and very, very charming, who's lazy, and good to look at, and unscrupulous, and not awfully profound—someone who'd smash her heart without hesitation, and go his way laughing."

Again shyly she laid a hand on his, and this time the fingers that were a

little too long, and white, and slender interlaced with hers. "You who've branded me a 'just-so-far' temptress, can you imagine what it would have been had I gone in for fervour? Take Demarest for instance. . . . Week-ends at an Adirondack camp! The Adirondack camp, you know, is the American Alpine chalet, Sorrento villa, shooting box in the highlands. Gives a decent tone to sub-rosa romance. Can't you see Clayton Demarest sitting on the steps of an Adirondack lodge beneath a shivery white moon and singing 'The Banks of the Wabash' in close harmony with me? Wouldn't it be depressing? He'd call me Addie. I'm very, very certain he'd call me Addie. And he'd make the trip an excuse for a declaration of honourable intentions, and solemn pledging of vows. . . . Would it be a frivol? Would it be a spree? . . .

"And Grahame? Can you see old Grahame as a gallant? Grunting, snarling, patting me on the head, shaking his fist and daring the world to call me an Ishmaelite. Would it be a carouse? I'd wilt beneath a lot of moral platitudes turned upside down, and quite as spirit-blighting in their inverted state. . . . Do you remember what you said about women conceived as vague, visionary unattainables? That idea has a terrific hold on the men of to-day, and because at the same time she caters to an older instinct for laughter and heyday moods, it's your poor, reviled coquette who suffers the most from it. . . . One's foreordained to coquetry. I couldn't give up throngs and homage for anything in the world. . . . That's why—that day—with Clayton Demarest coming through the hall—I was so furious and frightened . . . so insanely terrified—"

Strangely, shyly jubilant, she bent over him, smoothed back the hair that straggled over his eyes, and with a faint sound, half chuckle, half gasp at her daring, brushed his forehead with her lips. Again the little shiver. "It was so chilling—the homage from a distance." Again the pleading look. "I was always begging for something that frightened me so."

Of a sudden the reflective mood fell away from her. She sprang to her feet with dancing eyes and hands outstretched to him.

"Do you remember what you said about Judas being found with a cloak he'd given a beggar wrapt around him? And about the just-so-far temptress yearning for high treason? You who know it all, there you were right! With women like me it's always Judas who's the well-beloved. . . . Your nasty little revenge—I'm so grateful for it! So ashamed of having been scared and silly! So proud of that book! So glad they all believed the lies! So glad they know there's someone who doesn't think me up to much! Oh, it's good to be a pariah! Good not to give a damn! Good to kick up one's heels! . . . This tweaking of Mrs. Grundy's nose! This what-the-hell-do-I-care sort of thing! . . . Will you let me be your door-mat for a while, Nigel, dear?"

His weary air had vanished. Eager, ardent, he radiated his pride in a just claim upon this woman whose eyes sparkled up into his. He was beside her, with his arm about her, when for the first time he spoke, quite without a favoured suitor's customary husky fervour, quite without the far-famed Geddes ingenuity. "You're rather a lovesome creature, Adelon."

"Oh, I have my good qualities, but they're few, and not awfully apparent, so forgive them, dear."

Still with a vestige of tyro timidity, she hung her head. But when he took the little chin in his hand, and raised it, her dimples flashed. "You don't think me up to much?"

"And it will be neither Addie nor the Adirondacks."

He bent his head to meet her upturned lips. A little glad sigh escaped her as she nestled comfortably at his shoulder. And beneath the purple-gold glow of the setting sun, the two stood so through a long silence, in a sort of hush of the senses fraught with lazy,

blithe promise that gradually, however, became an insistent summoning to conflict, a beckoning from this moment all of whose witchery would be lost for these thirsters for triumphs and applause did it impose, even as it acclaimed them outlaws, a ban upon the triumphant parade of their outlawry.

When at last Adelon raised her eyes, again they lighted upon her own reflection, all flushed and radiant in the mirror over Geddes' shoulder. Her neck craned. Her head tilted. Always the Forsbrey, she nodded her approval. "Looking rather well, don't you think? And it's good to feel in fine fettle on the eve of a momentous campaign! For to-night they are coming to dinner, Nigel—the loyal ones, the staunch ones, the tried and true ones—coming with their pity, and their pats on the back. And to-night they are to be dumfounded, for to-night you will greet them at my side. To-night we appear in new rôles, you and I. To-night the satellites must be made to abase themselves before outcasts who glory in their shame."

She slipped from his arms, tossed the fox scarf about her, and adjusted her veil, her zest for the aproaching conflict reflected in his eyes. "Hurry and get dressed. Get out of that purple, King Solomony thing, and into evening clothes as only you can wear them."

Geddes was smiling the nonchalant smile that proclaimed a return to his old self-assurance and self-gratification, his old, lazy, insolent charm. Only a line or two about the mouth, and a shadow beneath the eyes, betrayed the long weeks of angry humiliation that had gone by. "It's been hell, hasn't it, Nigel?" she cooed. "And to-night you will find the atmosphere among the tried and true ones very icy, my rococo Iscariot."

She kissed him lightly, laid her cheek against his, and for an instant rested her head at his shoulder. Barely audible came her murmur:

"A cloak you gave a beggar will temper your sufferings, dear."

HE AFFRONTS THE DESTINIES

By Morris Gilbert

I'M after crying for a bolt
To put me into hell,
So then, a-blessing, on my brow
A dainty rain-drop fell.

I up and called upon the hills
The vengeance of the Lord,
And April came to christen them
With sun-showers on the sward.

I can be lonely now, I cried,
The wrath is just a sham;
Greatly alone I'll be: and now—
God save me!—so I am.

A LITTLE JOURNEY TO THE PLACE OF ACCOUNTING

By Lillian Foster Barrett

I

SHE sank into her chair with just the right degree of surrender to circumstance, and, closing her eyes, waited for the train to start. It started, to the gradual letting down of her pretty tension and the unclosing of her lovely eyes. The lady sat up, rearranged her baggage, twisted her chair to a more advantageous angle, and then settled intensely to her day's work. It was always this way—the delicious thrill of expectancy preliminary to a trip, merging into the nice exhaustion of its start and then—then—

Thea Marden was a writer. She had come into prominence suddenly, spared the usual struggle for recognition. When pressed as to first causes (and in Thea's very psychic little set one was expected to press for first causes) she would only sigh and turn away with the murmured words, "I took ten years to live first."

Thea went in for onomatopœia (they all did), and she never quite exhausted the possibilities of that word "live." A fresh change could always be rung upon it to suit the newest auditor, and Thea's voice was quite wonderful.

She herself preferred to linger on the v; that v could be made so redolent of Bourbon roses, so heavy with suggestion of oriental passion. She could conjure up in the mind of the least imaginative shadows of strange lands and uncertain fragments of great cities of the East that haunted through the very vagueness of their beauty. Or she could bring the word out quickly, incisively, with a crispness that bespoke Viking vigour. And yet again, there was a certain reckless abandon as of supreme disillusion, a glimpse now and then of a soul bruised by contact with a brute world.

It was remarkable what Thea could do with that word "live." It proved a spur to the imagination of many a struggling young artist in whose vision Thea's present clarity of soul seemed the more luminous for the shadowy background of her past. Each member of her little *côterie* adored her, pronounced her an inspiration or stimulation according to viewpoint.

There was the Englishman, big, brown and tender, who, when Thea's name was mentioned, spoke softly of her humanity, her all-embracing charity. Thea had once said at an "evening," in answer to the criticism that a certain poet was dirty, "But what does dirt matter, when the man has poetry in his soul?"

It was really very touching. The incident was bruited about with the more poignant effect because of Thea's own daintiness.

"She's big, man, she's big," cried her Englishman.

Her Frenchman nodded thoughtfully.

"And she's beautiful," he said.

Then there was her Russian, a man who denied the flesh and exploited people's souls. Thea had been conscious the first second she had met him that her pretty new evening dress was without effect, that the impression she made—and it was perfectly obvious she had made one—came from something deeper than surface allure.

"I might just as well have been in rags," she said proudly afterwards, and thrilled to the experience the more.

The man had looked into her eyes.

"You—you are cruel," he had pronounced without preliminary.

That delighted Thea. She was getting rather tired of being big and brave and lovely.

"Cruel?" she had echoed with just the right degree of vague wonder.

"Cruel," he repeated. "You take people as experiments. You are ruthless about getting down deep into their minds, probing their souls. I can see it. I have been watching you. Now, at this moment, you are looking at me as a specimen. You are capable of tearing and rending to get what you want. It is your profession, to vivisect souls—to—to—"

Her newest cue!

From that time on Thea recognized herself as a sort of soul vampire and revelled in the image of her cruelty. It was evident in every way. Instead of the old wistfulness and plaintive voice there was substituted an intense alertness that was shown in her every move. The old evenings gave way to a success of *tête-à-têtes*. She would lean forward with parted lips and half closed eyes, a pretty picture of strained attention, and study her *vis-à-vis* with an intensity of scrutiny that let nothing escape it. It was wildly exciting; it had all the exhilaration of big game hunting. Thea felt she understood perfectly the sensations not only of the hunter about to shoot, but of the lion about to rend and tear.

She was perfectly ruthless. Once she sensed any reservation in a person's nature she was capable of resorting to the most unscrupulous methods to break through it. Her Russian encouraged her.

"You are like Zola," he said once.

"Oh, no!" she protested weakly, and smiled contentedly.

She wrote up all her friends, and then took to exploiting strangers. She even brought home to lunch with her once a little newsboy.

"It meant infinitely more to me than dining conventionally at the Ritz!" she pronounced. "A beautiful adventure!"

Then there was the iceman, her janitress, the old man at the newsstand round the corner. More beautiful adventures that left Thea gasping with the possibilities of human nature. She let herself run riot, and turned each time to her Russian for applause.

Then one night she had been brought up short.

She had been dining with her Frenchman, and they had come back to Thea's own apartment for coffee. The lights were low. The fire in the grate glowed fitfully, and everything invited revelation.

Thea spoke in low tones of the mania that had come upon her, the passion for exploitation of the human soul. She spoke of the truth of intuition.

"I have reached the point where I know instinctively what a person is always. I can trace his thoughts, follow the inmost workings of his mind. I try not to, sometimes; it seems hardly fair, like looking in through an open window, and yet—well—my profession is my only excuse. And this, this thing, this craving for psycho-analysis is becoming my whole life, my—"

She looked very pretty and very intense as she spoke, her trailing black dress merging into the shadows of the room, her eager eyes lighted by the fire in the grate.

Then a strange thing happened. Her Frenchman turned away, and Thea had the startled suspicion he turned away to smile. It was disconcerting; it destroyed the sense of security in herself as a convincing personality; it —it was, all in all, inexcusable and—

She rose trembling, and, wide-eyed, showed her hurt. The man faced her.

"But why take life second hand?" he said coolly. "Can it be you are afraid—"

Thea gasped.

Afraid! She who had all the blood instincts of the hunter who beats the African jungle for its prey! She who had been up in an aeroplane—how

many feet was it? She who probed deep, who had lived, *lived*, LIVED for ten years! The thing was preposterous, so preposterous in fact the words she would have uttered to combat the accusation refused to be spoken. All she could do was to stammer helplessly:

"I—I don't understand."

Her Frenchman nodded sagely.

"Oh yes you do. After all, it argues a concession to fear, a certain cowardice that you go to others to study life. Why not live first hand, put yourself under the microscope?"

"But I—I *have* lived for ten years," protested Thea.

The Frenchman laughed outright at that with an unpardonable air of condescension.

"Yesterday's sensations!" he exclaimed. "So many dried flowers! Musty and unwholesome! They crumble at a breath."

He shrugged.

Thea turned away. She felt herself on the verge of tears. It was as if all her theories, like the poor dead flowers, had crumpled at a breath. That fealty she had been able to exact from her followers just because of her own belief in herself she saw now in ashes.

"You are big," her Englishman had told her, and believed it, because she had believed it, too.

And now, this infidel of a Frenchman had brought in a disturbing element with his hint of cowardice. Cowardice? Could there be truth in the accusation? Ought she herself to get down to things, drive life in a corner? Take emotion red with her heart's own blood, rather than by the cold white light of analytical reason? Yet why, why? She felt a violent protest and a wild fear. She had been so happy in her present life and would have been content to go on so always.

In the meantime, the Frenchman had relieved the tension.

"After all, you are beautiful, woman's only excuse for being at all," he had said lightly, and the evening ended with a discussion of woman's place in the universe.

Thea had rather a bad time with herself during the next four weeks. The mocking smile she had surprised on the Frenchman's face she expected to see reflected on the faces of her other friends. She determined to forestall such an event by a change of tactics. She talked less of vivisecting others, and began to converse gently of poetic licence, viewed from an ethical standpoint.

"But you can't expect your artist to be held by ordinary laws. He has to feel to create, and you can't straightjacket emotions!"

And yet again, apropos of a woman in their little *côterie* who had taken unto herself a lover:

"Why not?" Thea had asked with an arch of her delicate brows. "For a woman who writes it may be—well—a sort of higher economy of the soul."

Her Englishman sighed.

"Thea will sacrifice herself yet—for the sake of humanity," he commented sentimentally.

Her Frenchman smiled.

Her Russian looked mysterious.

Thea grew more and more pensive daily. Then an awful thing happened. One of her stories was returned. It was one that showed distinctly the influence of her present perturbation, but of course Thea didn't realize that.

"They are tiring of me at that office," she said to herself, and swallowed hard at the thought. It's because they, too, have come to realize I am dodging life, that I skate over the surface."

She cried herself to sleep that night. Her career seemed pricked like a bubble; ambition lay dead.

Morning and a good cup of coffee revived her somewhat, but she stayed in bed all day, denied herself heroically to all who begged admittance. She needed the time to think, think, and, besides, her eyes were red.

The second day brought a renais-

sance of hope and the forging of a supreme decision.

All right! She'd show the world, show her friends, show her Editor. She'd *live*, get her material first hand, and write her stories with her heart's blood.

She recalled her Russian's words. "You are like Zola." Yes, she would be like Zola, drag herself through the mire, stain her white radiance to enable her to wrest recognition from the world as a fearless soul that had sacrificed its all on the altar of her art. She had known all along something of the sort was expected from those who entered the literary world; it was for this reason she had shielded herself behind her past as implied in the words, "I took ten years to *live* first." Her first success had seemed a warrant of the efficiency of those words to meet the emergency. Her present set back seemed the more tragic for the confidence in herself begotten by her two years' acceptance.

Well—that was all over now. She must begin again. She fingered the manuscript, the return of which had cost so dearly. Then she wept a little more as over her dead self, bathed her eyes in a new lotion that held a vague suggestion of fading gardenias and sent out cards for an elaborate evening.

II

It was six weeks later Thea boarded the train for Atlantic City, and as we said before, turned with an almost feverish avidity to the study of her fellow passengers. It would seem that never before had her desire to probe into the souls of others been so overwhelming, so intense. Why was it? It may be that, having suppressed the old tendency so long in following out her new line, she determined now, free from the scrutiny of her immediate friends, to give herself up to her former habit unreservedly.

Or it may be that the six weeks held something Thea was most desperately trying to forget, and so gave herself no time for an introspection that might have proved troublesome in its consequences.

Or, could the difficulty, by any chance, lie in the future, always ateem with events? For, after all, a trip to Atlantic City is much more apt to be in the nature of a prologue than an epilogue.

Her Englishman had insisted on seeing her off.

"You look so tired," he said tenderly.

She shook her head wanly. "I might say like Brutus—'I have not slept.'"

Then in a subdued tone that held with its thrill of suppressed intensity, she continued:

> "'Between the acting of a dreadful thing
> And the first motion, all the interim is
> Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.
> The genius and the mortal instruments
> Are then in council; and the state of man,
> Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
> The nature of an insurrection.'"

Thea's little set went in for quotations, and elaborate ones at that. It really was remarkable how much preparation and foraging among musty tomes an "evening" involved, even a *tête-à-tête* for that matter. But wit and spontaneity, like butterflies, should be taken as beautiful things of the moment. Why trace a glorious illusion back to its grubby source? Thea's own words, when accused by some woman of deliberate study for effect. The woman was very plain looking, however, so Thea had forgiven generously the scepticism. "Distinctly of the bourgeoisie. What can her criticism matter?" she had said and displayed from that time on an even greater tendency to poetic lapses.

Thus it was her Englishman saw nothing incongruous in the Pennsylvania station as a Shakespearean set. It was rather poetic, in fact—Thea on his arm, the surging crowd about them. They had wended their way, meantime, as the lady quoted on, to the car designated on the little green ticket she held in her hand.

She laughed lightly as she finished,

but there were tragic depths in the eyes that evaded his as he made drastic efforts to settle her comfortably.

Then with a sudden realization of a tremble in her voice,

"Thea dear!" he exclaimed, "There's nothing the matter? You're not unhappy?"

But the train was about to start, so she dismissed him summarily.

"Shakespeare takes hold of me so," was her only explanation.

"Besides, a letter from my editor I haven't dared open yet," she added as she shook hands. "Good-bye. Yes, in a week! Maybe sooner!"

The letter, Thea knew, was in regard to a new story she had sent in a week before, a story that evinced strongly her change of line. It had been an emotional, high strung thing, a decided revelation of her new self she was fostering so carefully. It was in direct contrast to her usual delicate, cool, impersonal method of treating life. She felt it was big stuff, and did not doubt for an instant the power of the thing to grip. But it was just because it was so intense, so personal in its intensity that she felt strangely ill at ease in subjecting it to the eyes of an outsider. It was—well—as Thea said to herself—like running about without any clothes on right in front of people. And Thea always stickled for the proprieties as embodied in dainty *negligées*.

So it was there was a certain bashful modesty involved in not being able to read that letter from her editor immediately. It seemed the last tightening of a nerve tension, already strained to breaking point by other things totally irrelevant of editors and manuscripts. So she tucked the letter away in her bag, took off her Frenchman's violets and put them out of the sun, marked an article on hypnotism by her Russian in the *New Republic*, and then with a sigh of relief as of the putting off indefinitely and perhaps for ever of every issue of import in her life, she turned her eyes to the person across the aisle.

It was a man. Why is it the one across the aisle is so invariably of the opposite sex?

"A lawyer," pronounced Thea to herself.

How did she know? The accident, possibly, of his long legs which showed a tendency to stretch themselves, of his hair so neatly smooth it suggested slippery phrases, of his uplifted arms and interlocked hands that, supporting his head, placed him quite comfortably in communion with the ceiling of the car. Of course, a lawyer! Too easy for Thea! She liked them unamenable to classification, so that there might be a struggle involved before their eventual pigeon-holing.

The woman next the young lawyer was a fashionable dressmaker; the man beyond the professor in a boys' preparatory school. Thea tagged them at once. She didn't need the violin in the rack in front of her to classify her neighbour to the right. It promised, after all, to be a very stupid trip. And just now, when she so needed distraction from herself, from that awful problem that was hovering about in the back of her mind waiting to be dealt with.

No, she would not think. She swung her chair around quickly, and with a sudden sharp pang that was half joy and half pain at a desire too quickly fulfilled, she realized that she had found what she was seeking. A girl of perhaps eighteen was sitting in the next chair. As Thea turned she had caught her unawares and glimpsed in the depths of her dark eyes a soul that seemed torn with anguish and suffering. They looked at each other a tense second, then both roused themselves to meet the conventionalities of the occasion.

"Oh, I am so sorry. Did I startle you?" asked Thea.

She made her tone very casual, but her heart was beating wildly at the prospect of adventure. No ordinary situation could be responsible for the brooding melancholy the girl was struggling so bravely to hide.

"That's perfectly all right," she managed to answer in a low, constrained

voice, and moved her footstool a trifle to make way for Thea's.

"I like riding backward better," said Thea brightly when she was all settled. "The other way seems so—you know—drifting with the tide. Of course one doesn't drift in a railway coach, but you get the idea. It seems a yielding to circumstance, a giving in without a protest to brute force. Now this way I consider I keep my identity, that I—"

Thea was congratulating herself on making out so well on her argument when the girl interrupted.

"Why bother to explain?" she said quietly, and closed her eyes.

Thea was taken aback. She would have been angry had it not been that she felt secure in the vantage-ground of her superior intuition. The girl with closed eyes was even more delicious to exploit than she had been before. Thea set to work rapidly to make her points. Well dressed, richly dressed, in fact! Dark and romantic! Hot-blooded, doubtless! *No* baggage, but something suspiciously fluffy tucked in the Kolinski muff! Of course the conclusion was obvious—a rendezvous.

Thea drew a quick breath. Poor little girl! She saw the whole drama stretching out plainly before her with all it involved of young, ardent passion and recklessness of convention. A lover with eager eyes, an unyielding family and this—a quick decision to take the cash and let the credit go. A day or two at the seashore with the loved one. What mattered anything else? A moment's abandon—and yet! How foolish! How weak! It was because women were ruled by impulse there were so many tragedies in the world. If a woman were old enough to think clearly, make a cold-blooded decision with a definite object in view, that were different! She had the justification of going into the thing actuated by some higher motive or other. But to plunge just from sheer momentary emotion! The sort of thing one expected from the lower classes! It really was disgusting.

Thea roused herself with a certain indignation, but the quivering of the girl's lower lip reduced her to sympathy once more. No, there was nothing vulgar in this. The thing was a big mistake, that was all, a mistake the girl would regret always and always. If there were some method of saving her! Some way of appealing to her intelligence!

Then inspiration came to Thea. Perhaps this keen intuition that had been given her was really a divine instrument by which she might be able to *save* souls. Previously she had taken her gift simply as a means for securing material for her work. She felt now for the first time the larger responsibility of it. She had a mission, and this little girl trembling so pathetically before her was unquestionably god sent. It was for Thea to point a higher motive in life than mere fleshly gratification. If there appeared an element of incongruity in her being selected on this particular trip as a disciple of self abnegation she swept it aside. After all, life spelt incongruity, so why stumble over a scruple when there was a soul at stake?

Thea looked at her watch. It was eleven o'clock. Two hours more. Not a second to be lost!

She drew a deep breath, leaned forward and began.

"You have been to Atlantic City before?" Banal put to the point. The girl opened her shadowy eyes.

"No!" she murmured.

"It's rather nice," went on Thea, "but it's becoming so much a place for indiscriminate *affaires*."

It was stark, but there was no time for delicate preliminary.

"You go there often?" asked the girl.

Thea stared.

Of course the child meant nothing, but there was rather an ugly gleam in the eyes that met hers quite steadily.

She shook her head sadly as one shorn of all illusions.

"No," she said. "Very seldom. I cannot bear to watch that sort of thing. It is such a dreadful mistake."

The girl turned away slightly.

"I suppose there seems a certain glorious freedom in it to a woman the first time. How few stop to realize what must needs follow!"

Thea had warmed up to her subject by this time, and was doing herself full justice. Her wonderful voice had just the right vibratory thrill. She watched the girl before her quivering to its effect and was satisfied.

She went on in low, even tones. "It is never a question of one man. There is always a second, a third, a fourth. And in what, then, is a woman better than her submerged sisters of frank sin?"

The little girl put her hand over her face.

"A woman thinks in the beginning that love is an excuse," Thea went on. "Love, *real* love, would never stoop that way. It's too big, too pure a thing. If a woman consents to an amour it's because there's evil in her, yes, evil. She may cover it up with pretty phrases, fool herself for a while, but in the end, when it's too late, she realizes the truth, that she had been fostering all along not a noble emotion, but an ignoble passion that will work to her destruction in the end. All women—" Thea wound up triumphantly—"all women who go in for that sort of thing, whatever their pretext, are bad, absolutely and thoroughly bad."

The little girl roused herself now. She opened her lips as if to speak, but was unable, through her emotion, to force an utterance. The antagonism Thea read in her eyes she set down to the triumph of her own oratory. Naturally, under the circumstances, the girl would resent the truth as it had been presented to her. Well, the keener her resentment, the surer the effect of the words that had caused it. The child would not go to her rendezvous with the same ease of conscience. There was a chance she might not go at all. In the meantime, let her alone for a while, let her think on her sin.

Thea swung her chair around on some pretext or other, and was pleased to notice the girl made a rush for the dressing-room.

"Tears will do the youngster good," thought Thea, and then resorted to smelling salts as she realized with a terrible sinking of heart that their destination was but an hour away. She closed her eyes, and the problem of the little girl faded away, blurred out by the overwhelming one of her own Destiny.

White and strained, Thea sat for the rest of the trip, staring into the future, trying to wrest from it its secrets.

III

"Atlantic City!"

The words came harsh and grating athwart her reverie. Thea started. The porter seemed to look at her curiously.

"Baggage? Where are you stopping?"

"Oh!" gasped Thea. "I—I'm not stopping. That is, I don't know." Then in desperation:

"I'll carry my bag myself."

The rest was all a wild chaos of impressions—a crowd that jostled, a feeling of stupendous guilt as of one with a scarlet letter on her breast, a fleeting glimpse of the little girl, and then—*his* face scanning eagerly the crowd. The man who had come into her life at its psychological crossroads six weeks ago and who had brought her gradually to *this* as a culmination of their romance.

Romance! Thea shuddered. It had lost whatever claim it had to be that, whatever glamour it ever did possess when brought down to the sordidness of a common rendezvous. The horrid details of the thing as they must carry it through loomed grotesque. The stealthy selection of a small, out-of-the-way hotel, the furtive registering—

He had seen her; the blood pounded back to her heart. And yet, no! The look of joyous expectancy on his face changed. In its stead was an angry bewilderment. What could it mean? He was looking straight at her. She

struggled to twist her lips into a smile. And yet, he was not looking at her but at—

A minute later Thea slipped unseen into the waiting room. Just outside the window there was being enacted an hysterical scene that threatened to block traffic.

With her arms in a death grip about the man's neck the little girl, sobbing wildly, was pouring out her woes regardless of who might hear.

"Oh, father! Father, dear! I couldn't stand it. I read all her letters. You—you left them about in your library. And the other night when I heard you telephone I knew you were going to meet her here and I came down to save you. I couldn't stand her taking you away from me. You've been father and mother to me always. You're so good, and she's bad, bad. She sat next me on the train. I recognized her from the picture you have in your watch. You left it on your bureau one day. And oh! she is so very bad. She told me herself that all women who met men this way—"

Thea stepped out of hearing and tore a leaf out of her note book.

"Renunciation," was the word she wrote, dramatic in its crypticness.

"Give that to the man outside with the little girl who is crying," she ordered a porter, and then stepped quickly into one of the buses that was about to start.

Inside, to hide her trembling confusion, that was half relief as at an abyss escaped, she opened her Editor's letter.

"The story is awful. Why this emotional simoom? Go back to your old line. Yours the charm of a superficiality that must needs dodge real issues to keep its delicacy! You can't make a Tess out of a Peter Pan—"

* * * * *

At the hotel when she ordered her room, Thea was quite herself with the old unbounded faith in her career and her Destiny.

"A room on the top floor, please, where I can breathe plenty of fresh air and write ad infinitum."

WILD AIR

By Edward J. O'Brien

THE brimming foam of morning
Weaves light across the hill,
Where wistful apple petals
Fall soft, and very still.

And down the curving hedgeway
There runs a little wind
So faintly stirred with music
It leaves a sigh behind.

A spray of song drops idly
In laughter from a cloud.
Wild air weds earth and heaven,
And my heart is loud.

TRANSACTION IN A HOTEL LOBBY

By Elsinore Robinson Crowell

A HOTEL lobby was no place for a child, especially that hotel lobby. Mrs. S. Roger Waldron glared over her armoured chest as, through an affront of tobacco smoke, she watched the little chap cutting capers before the applauding men. What could his parents be thinking of? Barely six and exposed to such vulgarity! Spiritually, the good dame laid back her capable New England ears and neighed with horror.

The little boy was playing he was a bear. He scrambled about on all fours, growling furiously in a wilderness of cuspidors and trousered legs. Sometimes he worried a leg with his small white teeth and the owner begged for mercy. Every now and then someone would throw him a nickel; he would grab it fiercely in his rosy mouth, and the men would laugh. Mrs. Waldron felt herself covered with the prickly heat of outraged hygienic righteousness. Nickels in his mouth—how nasty!

Now he was doing a tango, his stubby legs spraddling, his tiny body hitching along. The men guffawed, nudging one of their number, a pike-faced by-product.

"He's got your number, Percy Boy!"

"Now you see what a little charmer you are when you hit the chicken yard!"

"Hit it up, Bub. Show us how you do those Theda Bara eyes!"

The little boy was gleeful over his success. Never in his life had he experienced such popularity. It was a kind world to little boys. Words failed him. He jumped about like a "hobby toad" and gave mighty squeaks. A man with a fumed oak face and a suit in one of those quiet horse-blanket effects poked a dollar into his hand. "Here kiddo, raise hell with that."

The negro porter rolled by and absently slipped a toy mouse down his back. It was a tremendous joke.

The little boy squealed and gurgled, the men strongly advised war, the porter fled with every sign of panic.

"Disgusting!" snorted Mrs. S. Roger Waldron. "Playing with a negro! Is his mother insane? And receiving money—his pockets are fairly bulging with it."

Her pointed, unpowdered nose stiffened like a terrier's, her matronly dewlap quivered indignantly. "Thank God, I knew a mother's duty. My lambs did not stray among wolves." Her face assumed a "see Acts xx. 29" expression. It was a little habit of hers that did not serve to endear her to her acquaintances.

A man was drawing pictures for the child. He was an oldish man with a sagging mouth and greenish puffs under his stale eyes. He was most unclean, but he held the little boy in his lap and drew delicately joyful pictures of fairies and bunnies and dancing aeroplanes. The child's eyes were starry; at each new masterpiece he crowed with delight and insisted on an exhibition. The men crowded behind them, joking, shoving, spitting. The child's happiness bubbled over. He threw warm little arms about the man and kissed him.

The soul of Mrs. Waldron arose in revolt. The man was *filthy!* This must be stopped. She massed for attack.

The boy had clambered down and

was trotting at the heels of a man who approached the cigar stand with an air of intense mystery. The little boy was pink with suspense. The cigar girl had bleached hair, gummed in waves to a vulcanized complexion. She wore pendant "diamond" earrings and an "indoor-sport suit. Her eyes were hard, shallow, like cheap, ornamental buttons. She smiled at the little boy.

"Hello, Buster, how's the world treating you?"

"Say, Sweetie," confided the man with a wink that had seen much service, "'spose you got something in that blue box for little kids what like candy?"

"O-o-o-o," breathed the little boy, on tiptoe. "'Spose you have, Mrs. Sweetie?"

The men howled.

This was too much! Anyone could see what the creature was!

Mrs. Waldron advanced, one hundred and ninety pounds of virture rampant. She beckoned the cigar girl aside and addressed her with frigid aloofness.

"I wish to do something at once about that child. This is outrageous. None of you seem to have the slightest idea of decency in your attitude toward him. His parents evidently will not protect him. I wish their names at once. I shall appeal to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I am secretary of the State branch and my request will have weight. That, in this day and generation, an innocent child should be subjected to an atmosphere of such viciousness and vulgarity—"

The cigar girl's eyes snapped and she burst shrilly into the midst of Mrs. Waldron's harangue.

"Well, if you want to appeal, ma'am, I've no objections. Appeal to the dog-catcher or the street-cleaner or any other of your gentlemen friends. This sure ain't no place for youth and innocence, for which same reason I've been wondering why you stuck around. What you need is a season ticket to a cold storage plant, you an' your old purity. But as for the kid's parents interfering"—her voice flattened curiously—"I guess they won't be bothering much. The mother's up on the third floor, dead, and there ain't no father. Nobody's told the kid yet an' we was just doin' our best to look after him." Her voice rose again. "But if appealing is your middle name, why you hop right to it an' be damned." She turned and grabbed the box of candy with an angry snort.

Mrs. S. Roger Waldron turned as red as a Venetian sunset, choked, gobbled incoherently like a turkey, and tottered away.

SOME men are single because they were disappointed in love, but most men are disappointed in love because they did not remain single.

TO practise what one preaches is comparatively easy. Most people would find it more difficult to preach what they practise.

CONSCIENCE

By J. L. Morgan

IT was two o'clock in the afternoon—a raw, gloomy day of lowering clouds and occasional gusts of rain that splattered the windows—the kind of a day that stirs morgue-keepers into active preparations for increased business—and the spirits of Jim Jenkins were at their lowest ebb. As he sat, with aching head and dust-dry throat, at his desk in his shabby little office in the Watkins building—now in the sear and yellow of its existence, and largely given over to law, real estate, advertising doctors, palmists, mediums, and other low professions and callings—he was trying to forget, and yet at the same time trying to remember, the events of the previous night. For Jim had been drunk.

Jenkins was a lawyer, fat, lazy, good-natured, not over-neat in dress, and with an income that compelled him to work but slightly. So he had little business and consequently a good deal of time for conviviality. He usually took his first drink of the day at Mike's bar in the basement of the building, about ten in the morning, if he got down that early; and another about noon; and a good many after that, depending on what his cronies did. On occasion he got drunk, around towards evening, and then his "light went out"—which is to say that the next day he could not remember what had happened.

For an hour he had been sitting, staring with filmy eyes out the window trying to remember what occurred just after Schafer sang the *Beer Song*. It came to him, dully, that the crowd had left Mike's then—and went some place where there was green wallpaper and a nickel-plated chandelier—and, yes, an almost bald feather duster hanging against a door. The chandelier had exerted a sort of mesmeric influence—he could remember it distinctly, it being bright and shiny; but the feather duster came to him only by degrees.

Save this one vision of the wallpaper, the chandelier and the duster, the night had been a void. His lapse frightened him, and he recalled what had happened to some of his friends on like occasions. One had got killed accidentally, two of them had come out of it married—and the ladies had the papers to prove it; others had entered into disastrous conflicts with waiters and hackdrivers; and one of them had joined a secret order, composed largely of barbers and bartenders.

A pile of letters was on his desk, unopened—he hadn't the heart to work. And it hurt him to think—yet, think he must, for a thousand misgivings assailed him. Fearsome visions flitted in procession through his brain as he thought of what he *might* have done in those blank and irresponsible hours, and gradually the obsession fastened upon him, fear being the father of the thought, that he *had* done something—probably at the very least had broken an expensive mirror, or had ridden miles in a taxi without paying. In any event he felt that he was soon to learn the worst.

"Never again," he said to himself. "I'm off Mike's for life—"

The door opened and a large, heavily built man entered.

Instantly Jenkins looked at the man's shoes. Yes, they were the broad, flat kind worn by policemen—and detectives! His heart sank and he withstood with difficulty a sudden impulse to jump out of the window.

The stranger bowed curtly. "You are Mr. Jenkins, I believe?"

A maxim of one of his clients rose in Jenkins' mind: "Never fight the police."

With a superhuman effort he got out of his chair and clasped the man warmly by the hand.

"My dear sir," he said, with a ghastly something he intended for a smile, "won't you be seated?"

A sharp look of surprise flickered across the stranger's countenance, evidencing that the cordiality of his reception was unexpected.

"No," he said coldly, "I haven't time."

Jenkins shuddered at the rebuff. He wondered if the man would insist on handcuffs, or would take him quietly.

"Have you a pen?" coolly demanded the visitor.

Jenkins produced a pen with alacrity.

"And now some paper."

"You bet," said Jenkins. "Anything you want, old man—any little old thing you want."

Unheedful of this attempted familiarity, the stranger dipped the pen in the desk inkwell and drew a number of horizontal lines on the paper, and Jenkins, leaning over his shoulder, counted them breathlessly. There were twelve—in two vertical rows of six each, spaced an inch apart.

"Watch me closely," said the man.

He drew from his vest pocket a fountain pen, and with this he carefully cross-hatched each of the horizontal lines with four short vertical ones. Then through and about all of this he started drawing an endless number of curves and circles, making a design mystic, Oriental—occult.

A sickening sensation surged through Jenkins' vitals—a sense of goneness in the pit of his stomach. Was this, he asked himself, some weird psychology of the third degree?—if so, he must have committed some terrible crime. Or was it—a moving picture show that he had seen was responsible for this thought—The Secret Sign of Death?

Faster and faster the mysterious stranger circled his pen. The maddening convolutions of the never-ending curves seared the fear-stricken lawyer's brain, and he could hardly keep from shrieking.

"So far, so good," said the stranger, suddenly snapping the cap on the end of his pen and putting it back in his pocket. "Now comes the final test."

Jenkins shivered. The final test was at hand and something told him he would never survive it. His nerves were snapping and his mentality was all gone; he would confess to anything.

"Now," said the man, "are you ready?"

Without waiting a reply he reached into a secret pocket, somewhere in the inside lining of his coat, and drew forth a small vial of colourless liquid. Dipping the end of a wooden toothpick into the bottle, the stranger applied the wet end to the paper, drawing it slowly back and forth over the design. And as he did this Jenkins became aware of a strange, acrid odour. This, then, he told himself, is the end. The drug would soon overpower him—unconsciousness—and then perhaps, the river!

"*See!*" said the stranger, suddenly holding the paper aloft. "Your lines are all gone—mine remain! The marks made with your writing fluid have vanished—mine are still there!"

Jenkins, near collapse, was unable to stand the strain longer.

"Who are you?" he shrieked. "And what do you want?"

The stranger turned upon him with savage irritation.

"I am a salesman for the Snuffinpup Stationery Company," he said; "and I'm trying to sell you a quart of ink!"

With a low, choking cry Jenkins sprang upon him.

The salesman was no match for him. And after strangling him for a pleasurable fifteen or twenty minutes, Jenkins hurled him through the door. Then, pulling down his waistcoat and straightening his tie, Jenkins put on his hat and departed, whistling cheerily, for Mike's.

CONTREBANDIÈRE

By Charles Dornier

JE chassais l'année dernière, aux environs de Pontarlier, en compagnie de mon ami Georges T . . . et de M. V . . . , un jeune lieutenant de douanes. Cette frontière ne manque pas d'une certaine grandeur sauvage. Des monts farouches, hérissés d'un collier de forts, la gardent, dogues monstreux. Entre les murs noirs des sapins, des prés-bois suivent le fond des vallées longuement désertes. Pas de culture, sauf, çà et là, quelques champs d'absinthe dont le vert déteint, comme sali, tranche avec celui des grasses pâtures où des troupeaux solitaires font tinter, cascade sonore, des cloches critallines. De rares fermes, sous des arbres, montraient à peine leur pignon anguleux de planches.

Et comme je demandais: "Où sont donc les habitants ici? De quoi vivent-ils?" mon ami me répondit: "Ils ont leurs troupeaux, lours bois de sapins, et la contrebande. L'herbe et le bois poussent tout seuls. Ils ignorent et travail. Ils sont forts, énergiques et rusés. Une expédition menée à bien se chiffre par un joli bénéfice."

— Ces gens-là ont la contrebande dans le sang, fit le lieutenant douanier. Ce n'est pas pour rien que les Espagnols ont séjourné par là. Ces Comtois aiment le risque, et Dieu sait s'il y en a: les mauvais temps, la nuit, les précipices, la balle de nos douaniers, et, plus terribles, les crocs de nos chiens!

— Je les envie, et vous aussi. Cette vie sauvage de force et de ruse, en plein pays civilisé, a pour une imagination virile de magnifiques séductions. Vous devez en avoir vécu, de beaux souvenirs!

— Oui, dit le lieutenant. Un surtout me paraît caractéristique de cet instinct aventurier de la race, et l'héroïne étrange en est une femme. Cette Julia était une grande fille séche et souple avec un profil de chèvre, les yeux du diable, et qui, à la façon de nos montagnardes, fumait la pipe comme un homme. Elle était de la bande aux Grospillard, — un nom prédestiné, n'est-ce pas? — dont le quartier général était précisément cette ferme tapie là-bas, dans ces arbres.

Par des sentiers connus d'eux seuls, à travers des précipices affreux, ils passaient au-dessus du poste des Roches et allaient prendre au hameau de la Ronde, à deux kilomètres au-delà de la frontière, leurs charges de café, de dentelles, de bijoux, car ces contrebandiers de haut vol n'opéraient pas dans les tabacs, moins rémunérateurs.

Ils avaient des chiens aussi forts et aussi bien dressés, qui fourvoyaient, immobilisaient, attaquaient au besoin les nôtres. La Julia guidait la meute, ne portant rien, faisant ce qu'en terme d'affût on nomme l'*appeleur*. Elle attirait de son côté nos hommes et nos bêtes, et pendant ce temps-là toute la bande passait entre les anneaux de nos postes.

Nous la connaissions tous bien. Nos hommes, du reste, ne se privaient pas, en passant, d'aller boire un coup à la ferme, qui était aussi une auberge. Vous avez dû voir que la plupart des fermes ont, suspendue à leur porte, l'enseigne symbolique d'un genévrier. Dans les bois là-haut, la nuit, si on se recontre, on se tire honnêtement dessus. Ici, de jour, hors du service, on trinque sans rancune. Chacun son métier, après tout, et, s'il n'y avait pas de

contrebande, il n'y aurait point de douaniers.

Or, la mâtine, avec sa sveltesse souple, ses yeux de braise, son rire humide et sonore, attirait nos hommes. Un d'eux, en passe de devenir brigadier, Jean Helmer, un Alsacien, s'y laissa prendre. Ces hommes froids, je l'ai souvent remarqué, s'allument plus vite que les autres. Mais la mâtine le mena jusqu'au mariage. Oui, Monsieur, elle se fit épouser. Elle avait un beau magot, d'ailleurs. Quel était son but?

Nous fûmes longtemps à nous le demander, Peut-être, au début, en avait-elle assez de sa vie de hasard, et voulaitelle enfin goûter de la vie honnête et honorable. Je le crois assez. Mais le renard revient toujours au poulailler. Il lui fallait l'équipée nocturne et incertaine. Jean, son mari, pour monter sa garde, avait toujours Phanor, le plus beau, le meilleur de nos chiens, vous savez, de ces grands chiens-loups qui sautent droit à la gorge de l'adversaire, et, rien qu'en se dressant contre lui, de leur masse peuvent renverser l'homme. Ma roublarde avait apprivoisé la bête, et voyez l'audace! les nuits où son homme était de garde, elle allait retrouver sa bande. Le chien, qui la reniflait de loin, sans aboyer, courait à elle, et, pendant qu'elle le cajolait, ses amis et leur charge défilaient à couvert. Elle redevenait toutes les deux nuits l'*appeleuse*.

Il arriva qu'un soir, son mari, un coureur, je vous l'ai dit, et qui avait rendez-vous avec quelque pastoure des environs, se fit remplacer par un collègue. Il emmenait Phanor avec lui! La belle, ignorant que l'homme et le chien étaient changés, sur le milieu de la nuit, se dirige vers l'endroit où elle supposait son Jean de garde. Le camarade, roulé dans sa peu de bique, ne dormait pas, à cause de l'orage.

Les éclairs et le tonnerre n'arrêtaient pas. Il faisait un de ces temps ou, comme disent nos hommes, "le bon Dieu ne cesse pas de faire craquer des allumettes." Son chien, recroquevillé contre lui, soudain s'elança dans le taillis avec des abois furieux. Le douanier, levé aussitôt, entendit un fracas de branches, un cri éperdu de femme, et courant, à la lueur d'un éclair, il aperçut, terrassée et maintenue par son chien, l'épouse de Jean, la Julia.

Que se passa-t-il alors? Sans doute, l'ayant délivrée, il voulut s'assurer d'elle. Celle-ci, qui sentait le passage et la vie de ses compagnons, tapis non loin, en péril, dut employer toutes les séductions, tous les mensonges. Et, dans un suprême dévouement à ceux de sa race et pour se sauver elle-même, elle arracha à l'homme son fusil et l'abattit, sauvagement, lui et son chien. Et quand ceux des postes voisins, accourus aux détonations, l'interrogèrent, elle leur dit, froide, hautaine: "Je croyais retrouver mon mari. Cet homme voulait abuser de moi. Je l'ai tué." Il n'y avait pas de preuve certaine. On n'a pas poursuivi.

— Mais, interpellai-je, comment a-t-on su le vrai de l'histoire?

— Après ce drame, le ménage, vous comprenez, était devenu un enfer. Un beau jour, elle fila, de l'autre côté de la frontière, on ne sait où. Et alors ceux de sa bande, ne lui pardonnant pas sa faute, délièrent leurs langues."

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ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Various Hands

One of the great virtues of war-time fashions is that we can make use of every spare piece of material that we happen to have by us. Never were frocks so simple, so becoming, or so easily run up at home, and this last is a great boon, as dressmakers who have time to spare are not easily found nowadays, but the clever needlewoman has discovered that she can work wonders by cutting up two old frocks and making them into one really chic affair; chiefly because there is still a great feeling for combining two materials. From the hip-line downwards the skirt can be of a totally different colour and texture than the top, with perhaps a repetition on the loose belt, collar, and cuffs. Then again the jumper is a great boon, as it covers a multitude of sins at the waist-line, and can be made out of all sorts of odd scraps. For this reason surely the standard frock design suggested would be a mistake? The girl who has achieved a triumph of art at home, and looks to the uninitiated as if her frock had come from Bond Street instead of having cost not one farthing, could be made to feel very uncomfortable for not possessing a standard costume which she could not really afford, however small the cost. Besides *one* frock would not be enough, and her richer sisters would no doubt have two or three, besides running riot in all the very expensive etceteras that would be necessary. No! I cannot see the economy of standard frocks, though standard materials might be a great boon.

Now that the German element in dress has been eliminated, simplicity and good taste have, one hopes, come to stay. The Parisians are wonderful, and in spite of the very trying time they are going through, contrive to send us ever new and attractive little suggestions in matters sartorial.

The latest touch is skirt drapery! Hanging handkerchief ends seem to merge suddenly and get lost in the very slight folds of the skirt itself. But this needs the master hand, and also requires to be seen to be really appreciated. The semi-dinner frocks are delightful affairs. First the wearer dons a loose sheath-like garment of charmeuse—usually black—cut very low with possibly shoulder-straps of ribbon. Over this is worn a perfectly straight garment almost to the hem, usually carried out in georgette, richly embroidered and held in loosely by a girdle or swathed sash of brocade, while the sleeves are very short little affairs, although the overdress is not cut very low in the neck. These little sleeves are finding their way on to many of the afternoon frocks, and even on to some of the river muslins, much to the joy of the mosquitoes one would imagine. Talking of river cottons, some of these are too delightful for words in their absolute fresh simplicity. Imagine a little blue and white check with an open neck and short sleeves edged with tiny pleated frills of sheer white muslin. The bodice is cut on long loose jumper lines with a flat wide sash of the same material somewhere in the region of the hip line, edged with the same little frills and tied in a large bow at the back, and a plain full skirt also befrilled. Can you imagine anything more suitable to a punt on a hot summer day? Or again a pink, white, and purple-striped cotton cut on almost straight lines from top to toe, and bands of the same cotton with the stripes going round the figure at the hem and at the waistline, though the waist itself is scarcely defined. The neck cut in an open "V" with a very small and dainty collar of natural-coloured French muslin embroidery, and short sleeves with tiny turn-back cuffs of the same. It is curious how the history of dress repeats itself, and some of the present-day

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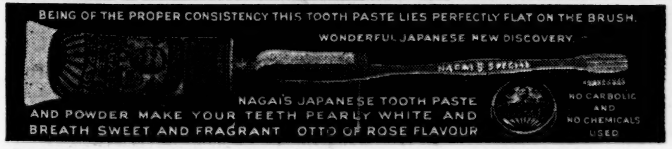
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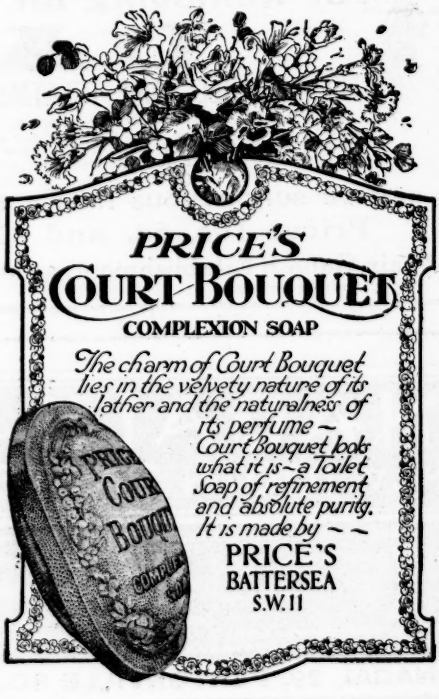
frocks are almost an exact replica of those that we associate with the ladies of the period of Arthur's Round Table. The long straight loose bodice, or kirtle, with its square neck and short sleeves, the skirt gathered below the hips, and the long loose girdle; surely, if we wore our hair in two long plaits over each shoulder and had a large bunch of keys attached to our girdles, we should be remarkably like the chatelaine of long ago. True, she did not possess the very lovely materials that we are so lucky in having, but as these seem to get more and more scarce and expensive, perhaps we shall return to pre-historic stuffs as well!

Nevertheless, the long straight waistline is vastly becoming, and our ancestors certainly knew what they were about when they adopted it. The short white cotton skirt and blouse that have been the regulation tennis kit for so long have had their day, and this year, if one wants to be "just so," one wears a short pleated skirt—white flannel for choice—and a bright coloured silk jumper of *tricot*. This can be had in the most lovely colourings, but canary and primrose yellow are the most favoured. One pretty idea was that of a white crêpe-de-chine jumper with a large sailor collar and tie made of a man's bandana silk handkerchief in rich colourings; the neat little straw hat swathed with another bandana handkerchief.

AIDS TO BEAUTY

The care of the complexion is not vanity, but a necessity for the well-being of the woman of the present day, hence the reason of the popularity of such a clever specialist as Mrs. Adair, whose authority on all subjects relating to the care and treatment of the skin is undisputed. She has taught us how fleeting is the beauty that is not cultivated and preserved by the aid of reliable toilet preparations. A chat with Mrs. Adair is an education in itself; it is most interesting to hear her explain all about her marvellous Ganesh preparations, and the method of applying the same. Her particular method of strapping massage neither drags nor stretches the skin, and together with the use of the Ganesh Muscle Oil, fills out lines and hollows, and quite rejuvenates the complexion. The Ganesh Eastern Cream keeps it soft and prevents chapping and is prepared to suit different skins. The Ganesh Diable Tonic is a perfect skin cleanser, it also is a capital lotion for bathing the eyes, it brightens them and relieves aching and soreness, while it removes all puffiness underneath them. Superfluous hairs, moles and warts are skilfully and antiseptically destroyed by electrolysis by Mrs. Adair and her skilled assistants. The interesting book published by Mrs. Adair, "How to Retain and Restore the Youthful Beauty of Face and Form," gives information on all matters relating to the care of the skin and the enhancing of beauty; this is obtainable from 92, New Bond Street, and should be read by all who are interested in their personal appearance.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